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THE IVORY GATE.

VOL. I.

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THE IVORY GATE.

VOL. I.

THE IVORY GATE.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO
THE LORD SUSSEX LENNOX

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED

IN REMEMBRANCE

OF DAYS OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

AND

EVENINGS OF PLEASANT CONVERSE.

THE IVORY GATE.

PROLOGUE.

"Sunt geminae Somni portae : quarum altera fertur
Cornea ; qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris :
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto ;
Sed falsa ad coelum mittunt insomnia Manes."

IT is a serene September evening, of the serenest year that I remember. *Non numero horas nisi serenas.* Excellent motto for a sundial, but wholly inapplicable to the human being. The hours which are unserene are those we number. This divine year, whose sunrises and sunsets, whose calm and silent noontides have entirely outdone the workmanship of any previous year within my memory, has to me been a year of trouble

and terror, a year of the utmost bitterness, yet withal of the utmost sweetness, a year which I shall remember after many millenniums of the worlds which are to come. Yet would I not have missed this year.

So many lessons have I learnt from it—specially concerning the love of woman and the friendship of man. To *know* is the great thing, after all. The days when men could live without knowing—live an unconscious heroic life—have vanished for ever. They were præ-Homeric, at least: possibly they have had no existence since the mystic fruit was eaten in the garden of the four rivers.

I am on an island. It is not a literal island. It is not

“Some unsuspected isle in the far seas.”

It is thirty miles from Hyde Park Corner. It is several miles from a railway station. It is beyond the reach of the *Times*, unless you are foolish enough to get that indis-

pensable journal down by special arrangement. It is a little cottage of four or five rooms, with a scalene triangle of a lawn in front, the said lawn being completely surrounded with lime-trees. Ah! how deliciously does the nightingale sing in those limes! But the immortal singer of Daulis is but a wayfarer, while there are thrushes and blackbirds haunting those limes all round the year, whose melody is mellower, if less brilliant. And then there is the robin—which ever in the haunch of winter sings. And for myself, I contribute doves and pigeons—and dogs. “To live without a dog and with a wife,” was Savage Landor’s idea of the acme of misery. I agree with him as to the dog.

Well, as I have said, it is an island. On all sides of me are your great county families, with their superb mansions and spacious parks, calmly ignorant of the existence of

cottages, save those inhabited by labourers. Their stream of equipages passes my gate every afternoon. I lean on the said gate, and smoke a cigar, and watch them pass: there is no fear that they will pull up to make a "morning call" on *me*! I am in a battered straw hat and tattered velvet coat; or, haply, if the day be hot, coatless and white-flannel-shirted—in any case, a veritable Bohemian. They have a noble contempt for men who write. Besides, they don't know that I write, and are sublimely indifferent to me, without having that special reason for disdain. So, it is very clear, I am safe. My island will not be invaded by the patrician Coquettes of Oakshire. The heavy swell of the county will not come to lounge on my lawn, where there is barely room for him to turn his whiskers.

Always have I been a dreamer of the Ivory Gate. Fortunate, doubtless, are they

who look at life through the gate of horn.
“See things as they are, and act according,”
that is the true maxim for success in life. I
have never seen things as they *are*—at least,
as they are in the opinion of the majority.
I don’t agree with the majority. I agree, on
the whole, with a poet who wrote after the
following foolish fashion :—

“More of the garden than the portico
Was his philosophy who dwelt therein ;
He little cared to win, or strive to win,
Power or renown from the sparse overflow
Of Fortune’s horn. To him three things were fair—
True love, unfettered song, and the wooing summer air.”

To me also these three things are fair
and dear—are an adorable trinity. I have
them in my island. Love is here. And
song is here ; for, if in no lyric mood my-
self, I hear the lark high above me (and
Shelley is with me, and Wordsworth) and
I hear mavis and merle in the limes ; and
I hear the monotonous delicious love-song

of the cooing cushat. And the fresh free air comes wooingly around me, with a life in it that tells me of the supreme and universal life. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

CHAPTER I.

MY HERO.

“Difficilis, facilis, jucundus, acerbus es idem :

Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.”

Martial, xii., 47.

PAUL VERYAN had four things to hinder him in his career: his luck, his intellect, his temperament, and his temper. Which of these four did him most harm, it is hard to say.

His luck was the oddest luck in the world. It came in gusts of good fortune; and then, just as everything seemed amazingly prosperous, there arrived a sudden reverse, which upset all his calculations, and left him far worse off than he was at first.

Surely a mischievous ironical sprite had presided at his birth.

His intellect (taking the word in a wide sense to signify the general whole of his faculties) was admirably adapted to a man who had not his way to make in the world. There was nothing he could not do ; only it must be done spontaneously. If a topic occurred to him whereon to write a leader or a *Review* article, he would produce something absolutely original, marvellously brilliant ; but then his luck would turn against him, and some dull fellow on the staff of any journal to which he might send it would assuredly have sent in a ponderous paper on the subject just before. He would write a lyric worthy of Sir John Suckling on the slightest provocation of a pretty piquant face. But set him down to write on "the question of the day," or ask him to contribute verse to a magazine, and he im-

mediately became impotent, imbecile. He was perfectly useless as a hack. This for literature—the only vocation or profession Paul Veryan tried. It would have been the same with anything else. The plodding capacity which turns curate into bishop, or barrister into solicitor-general, pertained not to him. He would have been a great man in times of great convulsion. Born when life runs in even grooves, he was simply useless.

Then his temperament. He was sanguine. He was also indifferent. He firmly believed that somehow or other he should get through the world, and did not exercise any prevision or precaution. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," was his favourite text; whereto he would add (as a corollary for the century) that it was sometimes a good deal more than sufficient. Give Paul Veryan a good dinner, drinkable wine, plea-

sant company, and he would not think of the coming day, though its cares and anxieties might be enough to drive him to suicide. His wit would sparkle like the St. Peray, even though his first draught in the morning might be laudanum.

Finally, his temper. Martial does not describe him badly. He was the choicest of companions, yet the most ready to take offence ; full of pleasant converse, yet frequently saying sharp things most difficult to forgive ; endowed with a curious magnetic fascination for both men and women, yet apt to alienate men by involuntary sarcasm, women by careless discourtesy. He was a man whom you might love or hate ; any middle course was impossible with Paul Veryan. Considering the constitution of the inhabitants of the world, it is not remarkable that he was more hated than loved. There were certain creatures, how-

ever, that unanimously loved Paul Veryan—dogs and horses, children and birds.

From this brief sketch, it will be seen that Paul Veryan was necessarily a failure in life. Ten thousand a year would have made him a decided success. It would have neutralized his perverse luck—have enabled him to utilize his intellect in Praedesque rhymes to pretty women, and brief brilliant speeches in the House; have thrown a permanent ruby-tinge over his sanguine visions; have rendered his difficult temper tolerable to all the toad-eaters in the country.

But then, although with a few strokes of the pen I can give Paul Veryan ten thousand a year, of what use would that be, seeing that it would spoil my story?

CHAPTER II.

MY HERO'S DOGS.

"Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit."

THERE is a street leading from the Strand towards the Thames, bearing the name of that noble family whose motto is *Sero sed serio*. In a second-floor front of that quiet street—quiet with the quietude of German bands and acrobats, and Punch and Judy and old clo'—sat Paul Veryan. It was ten in the morning. A calm autumnal sunshine glorified the sordid roofs of the bottle-shaped street. Breakfast was on the table—the ordinary lodging-house breakfast—chop, herring, broiled ham, with

a dish of withered watercress. Paul was reading (or pretending to read) the *Times*, and smoking a remarkably good cigar, and waiting for his chum. Paul had a chum, to whom it will be requisite to introduce the reader.

There were two dogs in the room. Growl, a Scotch terrier, very much of the Dandie Dinmont class, lay upon the hearth-rug. Growl was a dignified dog, but full of intelligence, from the tip of his nose to the uttermost end of his tail. He got his name from the fact that, as soon as he was born, he began to growl at his mother; possibly his acute instinct informed him that she had introduced him to quite a different sort of planet from that which he would have chosen for himself. Growl never feared the biggest dog, or the fiercest cat, or the widest water, and he looked upon himself as his master's master. In

Growl's private opinion, our friend Paul Veryan was Growl's dog.

The other dog, a perfect blue Skye, was standing on his hind legs on a chair, and looking out of window at a soft-faced Italian idiot, who was playing "Not for Joseph" on a barrel-organ. Wagtail (so called by reason of his being the tail-waggingest dog ever known) had a long nose, and strange dark melancholy eyes—eyes that seemed to indicate something supercanine. You could see that Growl was contented with his doghood; but Wag (for short) always looked like an imprisoned spirit of another order. He was the most affectionate timid inquisitive dog in the world. Wherever he went he must examine all he saw; and on many occasions he got himself into considerable difficulty by his determination to satisfy his curiosity.

Now, I wonder what these two dogs were

really thinking about. The country, I suspect ; both were country dogs, and had enjoyed many a hard tramp with their master over hill and through woodland. They did not at all admire Sarum Street. They hated crossing the Strand. They snarled at the cads they encountered in that vehement vicinage. They remembered the jolly rambles through Oakshire, and were a little disgusted with their master for keeping them pent-up in the metropolitan kennel. Yet they forgave him—having a fine dog-instinct that he—poor fellow!—couldn't help it.

Poor Paul ! His visions, over that matutinal cigar, were away in the country—away in calm silvan recesses, where he had known peace—away where he had once, *once only*, seen a woman whom he believed he could love. He had seen her for five minutes ; and would not forget her if he lived five centuries.

But, apart from her (if anything in his life could be apart from her) he pined for the country. He longed to bury himself in deep woods, to hear the susurrus of streams, to drink the satisfying silence of solitary moors. He had been in London so long. So long had he done the daily leader, the monthly essay, the quarterly prelection, so long had his brain been ploughed and harrowed by the noises of the Strand and the idiocies of editors. So long had he wasted life, with much pleasure, and much pain—but with no happiness. O to plunge into a very bath of quietude and verdure.

As he sat there, smoking his cigar, visious of remote delight came torturingly before him—remembered places, which he would give the world to reach. A quiet bay of Windermere—a still pool of the river Dart—a clump of beech-trees on the Chiltern Hills. Why were these spots inaccessible

to him? Why could he not leave the sonorous Strand, and dive into some green solitude?

The answer was humiliating—but there it was. *He had no money.*

A. had asked him to shoot in Berks, B. to yacht on the Solent, C. to spend their hunting season in the Shires, D. to do some deer-stalking in Scotland, E. to try a Norway river for salmon, and so on through the alphabet; but what was a man to do whose available capital was one pound two shillings and sixpence?

Why, he was invited to dine by the Earl of F. that very day, and his dress-coat was thoroughly disreputable, and there was no time to victimize a tailor.

Presently lounged into the room a stalwart figure, with no clothing save a flannel shirt and trowsers—Veryan's associate in those unattractive lodgings. Tall, straight

as an arrow, with a quick eye, and a heavy military moustache, you would have taken the new-comer at the first glance for a soldier. Well, he belonged to the army of martyrs who supply us with diurnal reading, good, bad, and indifferent. Tom Harington was fluent with tongue and pen and pencil; fearless and fond of adventure; prompt and plausible; a man who never thought at all, but could do anything except think. Men of this class can always open that tough oyster, the world, and if Harington had not possessed a fatal facility of living beyond his income, he might have been a prosperous gentleman. For he was not persecuted by Veryan's perverse luck, but invariably got hold of good things. Capitalists were easily magnetized by his suasive style; he could have made Baron Rothschild start a newspaper. He also, like his friend, had a slight peculiarity of temper; usually he was almost

boisterously jolly, but there came times when he sank into a sort of sulky depression, which made him a nuisance to himself and to everybody else. Happily he was in his pleasantest mood this morning.

"Well, Veryan, how do you feel? You don't look lively. I didn't get to bed till five this morning, and now I'm as gay as a lark and as hungry as a hunter. Anything for breakfast? Herrings—pshaw! who cares for herrings? The old lady might give us some *pâté de foies gras* for a change. But what's the matter, old fellow? You look seedy!"

"The old story," said Veryan. "I'm hard up. I want to get out of town and can't!"

"Upon my honour, Veryan, considering the ease with which you make money, your perpetual impecuniosity is disgraceful. Every-

body says you're a man of genius, yet you've never got half-a-crown. You will pass your old age in the workhouse, depend on it."

"All right, my boy. Evidently something has happened to please you, or you wouldn't be so extremely civil. What is it?"

"It's a profound secret at present," replied Harington. "A capital chance for you as well as me. I dined yesterday at an awfully swell place down at Richmond—such a dinner and such wines! Best Château Yquem I ever tasted, except some that the Emperor gave me when we dined *tête-à-tête* at Biarritz. The fellow's got such a house—billiard-room, private theatre, about an acre of conservatories, lawn down to the river, everything superb; and such a pretty daughter!"

"The daughter is not the capital chance you mentioned, I assume."

"No, no, *mon ami*. She's engaged, I

suspect. Those City fellows always marry their daughters in their own connexion, just like the aristocracy."

"A City man, is he?" said Veryan. "What good can he do you? He's too wise to start a paper, I take it."

"There you're wrong," replied Harington, who was hard at work on the despised herrings. "He's particularly eager to become the proprietor of a highly aristocratic journal, caustic and brilliant, with highly artistic illustrations, which he sagaciously considers I am the very man to edit. Don't you agree with him?"

"Quite," said Paul.

"Well, you don't seem very enthusiastic about it. It's a settled thing, I assure you, and I mean to make at least a thousand a year by it. There will be plenty for you to do. I shall want just the sort of verse you write. I mean to pay like a prince."

"Hear! hear!" said Paul. "What's the affair to be called?"

"The affair, as you irreverently style it, is to be called the *Rapier*. Isn't that a striking name? You must admit that I am tolerably suggestive."

"Did I ever deny it? When do you start?"

"In about a month. I know a capital place for an office. I am to see Roscoe about it at twelve; and he is to pay some money into the bank."

"That sounds like business," said Paul. "And so your capitalist is called Roscoe. I fancy I know some people of that name."

"He's a stockbroker. Confound it, I wish I was a stockbroker. Those fellows make money by magic, I think."

"Yes," said Veryan. "Who are the fellows that lose it to them, I wonder? It must be some sort of a swindle."

"Roscoe isn't forty yet, I should say, and he must be living at the rate of ten thousand a year, at least. He's got some splendid horses, and keeps a yacht at Cowes, and lives altogether in first-rate style. How it's all done by spending two or three hours a day in the City, is more than I can guess."

"Well, as I said, it's a swindle. Like Mr. Richard Swiveller, I'm an unfortunate orphan—perhaps, if I had ever had any parents, they would have been sensible enough to make a stockbroker of me."

Having polished off everything eatable upon the table, Harington retired to make his toilet, previous to meeting his capitalist; and in due course of time re-appeared in the best-fitting of bright blue frock-coats, with the most magnificent of neckties. He walked away, flourishing his cane with a fine jaunty air of triumph.

Then Paul Veryan pulled himself toge-

ther, and wondered what he should do that afternoon. He had agreed to dine with Harington at the "Cheshire Cheese," the hostelry whose poetic motto is "*Beau foi amour*." He had nothing to occupy the interval. Of course, had he done his duty, he would have settled down to some literary work, and contrived to make a little money. But Paul was in no mood for work. He was weary of London, and athirst for woods and waters. So he did the best thing he could under the circumstances—called his dogs, and turned towards Waterloo Bridge to get on board a river steamer.

At the corner, it occurred to him that he wanted to verify a quotation, so he entered Sotheran's classic establishment for the purpose. Who does not know that convenient haunt of literature, and the courteous and erudite *librarius* who can answer questions

as if he were an embodiment in the flesh of *Notes and Queries*? It was a volume of Macaulay to which Paul wanted to refer : as he stood at the counter turning its pages, somebody tapped him on the shoulder, and he was greeted by a friend.

But Paul's friend shall have a new chapter in his honour.

CHAPTER III.

MY HERO'S FRIEND.

"Hesterno, Lucini, die otiosi
Multum lusimus in meis tabellis."

PAUL VERYAN'S friend had in his hand a copy of Catullus. At the first glance it was hard to guess what he might be. Was he a country gentleman?—or a scholar?—or a poet? All three characters seemed to have a share in him. Dress and sun-browned complexion seemed to indicate the first of these; the Catullus in his hand showed the second; the third was adumbrated in the high forehead, a dome of thought, and in the lustrous luminous eye.

"Where are you going this afternoon?"

asked the new-comer, whose name was Arthur Westbrook. "You look in a state of considerable uncertainty."

"Uncertainty!" quoth Paul. "Did you ever know me otherwise than uncertain? I have never known, all my life through, what I shall do the next hour. Just at present I and my dogs are going on the Thames in a river steamer, just to cool ourselves. I shall smoke a cigar, and the dogs will look at me."

"Well, change your intent. Come and lunch with me at Thames Ditton, after the fashion that you love. I have nothing in the world to do."

"Nor I—except that I promised to dine with a man at six, which I certainly shall not do if I lunch with you at Thames Ditton. It doesn't matter. I'll come. He'll contrive to console himself."

"Wherewithal?—

*‘ Puella tenellulo delicatior haedo,
Asservanda nigerrimis diligentius uvis ? ’ ”*

“ More likely cognac and cavendish.”

The two friends strolled away to Waterloo, had a glass of sherry at the Station, and started for Thames Ditton. What a charming reach of Thames that is, with Hampton’s quaint palace and gardens on one side, and the jolly “Swan” (beloved by Theodore Hook, and immortalized in his facile verse), upon the other. Ah, how many a pleasant hour have I passed upon the stream and its margin in that indolent vicinage !

Westbrook had a pleasant little residence in this neighbourhood—a place of his own creation. He was a lover of horticulture, so he had purchased a few acres of freehold land, and built thereon a house of his own designing, and gone in for hot-houses and orchard-houses, wall-fruit and standard roses. His lawn sloped to the river, whereon lay

two or three well-appointed boats. Being a bachelor, with an easy income, he could do pretty much as he pleased; so he divided his time between three places—his study, his garden, and the Thames. In all three he was master of his work.

Lunch—a lobster, a few oysters, some divine muscat grapes, a bottle of Roederer, another of Château Yquem. This is not unpoetic food, eaten in the bay window of a pleasant airy room overlooking a lawn sloping to the Thames. Too good, the ladies will say, for a brace of bachelors. No matter. Veryan and Westbrook thoroughly enjoyed it.

“If I were an envious man,” said Paul, “I should certainly begin by envying you, old fellow. You enjoy life. You squeeze the juice out of it, as one squeezes a lemon. Here you are, comfortably at anchor, with nothing to do but what you like; while I am

a waif, carried to and fro by the wind of literature, and the waves of politics."

"My dear boy, you are in a morbid state. Shall I lend you a monkey? Shall I find you a rich wife? Shall I suggest to you a swindle? Paul, Paul, you deserve all you get. You have plenty of brain and backbone, but you waste your energies. You don't reflect, and you won't resolve. 'Character is destiny,' you know."

"Well, it's no good talking," said Veryan. "Mine's a devil of a destiny, so I suppose I've a devil of a character. Are you going on the river?"

"Of course I am. It will do you good, morally and mentally, to use the muscles of your arms a little. We'll have an hour or two on the Thames, and then come back and dine, and make a night of it. I can give you a bed, and the river will give you a bath in the morning."

It was agreed. Then they went upon the water, Paul rowing, Westbrook steering, and turning over his *pugillaria*.

"Which wins the University boat-race next year," said the steerer. "Oxford, I suppose."

"Certain."

"I wasted my time on some English elegiacs on the subject the other day," said Westbrook.

"Pestilent heresy!"

"I agree with you, but one must amuse oneself with nonsense occasionally. Shall I read them?"

"Fire away, old boy!"

Whereupon he began, standing up in the stern of the boat, much to the peril of himself and Paul, and declaiming as Christopher North was wont to declaim in a boat on Windermere.

"Which of all moments of life brims over with glory
supremest?

Sweet, Senior Wrangler and Smith's Prizeman to pass,
Double First!

Sweet in your maiden speech to astonish the Treasury
benches,

While even Palmerston grunts, 'Gad, here's a chap who
can speak!'

Sweet, amid limetree blossom, astir with the whispers of
springtide,

Maiden speech to hear, eloquent murmur and sigh.

Ah, but y^e joy of y^e Thames when, Cam with Isis con-
tending,

Up y^e Imperial Stream flash y^e impetuous Eights!

Sweeping and strong is y^e stroke as they race from Putney
to Mortlake,

Shying y^e Crab-tree bight, shooting through Hammer-
smith Bridge;

Onward elastic they strain to y^e deep low moan of the
rowlock;

Louder y^e cheer from y^e bank—swifter y^e flash of y^e oar.

Ay, and y^e winners that day, whether light blue win it, or
dark blue,

Seldom hereafter in life glory supreamer shall know."

"Not bad," quoth Paul, "though 'su-
premer' and 'supremest' are queer Eng-
lish. I like the jingle about the 'maiden-
speech,' and that pentameter—

'Up y^e imperial stream flash y^e impetuous Eights.'

But I'm not a convert to English hexameter, and don't mean to be."

"Confound it, there's a wasp! Do you know the wasps and hornets banded together, and positively drove me out of my orchard house this morning. I tried smoking the very strongest negro-head, but it affected me more than it did them."

"A good subject for some Latin verse, by-the-way. Did you ever try your hand at English hendecasyllabics?"

"So fantastical is the dainty metre, that I never feel certain I have caught its cadence. However, I did produce a trifle the other day, when, somewhat disgusted by a certain modern poet, I turned to our old friend the Veronese."

"Read," said Paul, resting on his oars. "I am just in the humour to criticise, having pretty well tired my flexors and extensors."

Whereupon Westbrook read :—

“Sirmio’s poet, lover of the salt sea,
 Lover of Lesbia, passionate and faithless,
 Hater thorough of Cæsar and Mamurra,
 Master of brilliant bitter-sweet iambs—
 Master also of maddening galliambs,
 Spilt too often upon the pure white marble,
 Crimsoning words that should have been unuttered :
 Wilful the laughing poet of Verona,
 As was Aegle, most beautiful of Naiads,
 Mulberry-staining somnolent Silenus ;
 Wild the marvellous master of iambs,
 As in Aegypt the stripling Dionysus,
 When, with revellers cymbal-clashing round him,
 When, with Satyrs and ivy-bearing Maenads,
 Gave he the grape, its glory and its gladness,
 Unto ye thirty nations of ye Orient.

“Thus though it be, yet nobody endureth
 The neoteric mocker of Catullus ;
 Lover of lithe limbs, kisses that are sterile,
 Passions that slay, and furious embraces,
 Ravenous teeth, and serpent-froth of pleasure—
 All that is vile, abominable, abject—
 All that the God-like intellect debases,
 Crushing utterly manliness and valour,
 Whence, for the swift strong splendour of Achilles,
 Comes effeminate idiocy of Attys.”

“Excellent good !” said Paul. “By the way,” said Paul, “is Attys derived from *Atta* ? Does *attagunis* mean a hermaphro-

dite? Was Attys the same as Adonis?
Was he a pine-tree?"

"Faith! I don't know. Ask Hesychius.
Consult the notes to Fischer's *Anacreon*. I
think we had better pull towards home.
Hesperus is rising."

But why should I weary my readers with
the classic colloquy of a couple of poetic
dreamers? It is confoundedly slow—
pleasant enough for those who love a lazy
hour to pass it on the bosom of Thames,
talking on topics which arride them.
But such converse is quite out of place in
a modern novel, where, you know, ladies
and gentlemen, shocking murders are ex-
pected, and bigamies, and elopements,
and passionate love-scenes, and depth of
colouring, such as you see

"When some great painter dips
His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse."

It is sheer fraud on publisher and public

to waste a whole chapter upon two lazy gentlemen, who astonish the swans by declaiming hexameters and hendecasyllabics. Never mind; you shall have the "earthquake and eclipse" almost immediately. Sound—sound the clarion!—fill the fife! You big fellow with the ophiocleide, don't spare your lungs! Thump away, you drummers! My heroine is coming!

CHAPTER IV.

MY HEROINE.

“The lovely Lady Christabel.”

MANY ways are there of writing that prose epic which is now-a-day called the novel. I take pretty much the same method as did the unique author of “Tristram Shandy.” Would that I could produce like results !

In the last chapter I promised to introduce my heroine. It must be done. With me promises are sacred. A cottage on the margin of Windermere is the first scene to which I desire to draw attention. Its tenant is one Colonel Brabazon, a florid old soldier,

who has known hard fighting and hard drinking. Our armies drank terribly in the Peninsula. The old Colonel, though a rigid martinet, had a soft heart somewhere or other in his iron old body; and when his comrade, Jack Woodbridge, was shot through the lungs, he swore a deep oath to take care of his orphan daughter Agnes. Somehow or other the performance of this vow resulted in his marrying the young lady—she being twenty, and he rather more than fifty. The marriage turned out well enough. Mrs. Brabazon was rather strong-minded, and ruled her Colonel more rigidly than he had ruled his regiment; and they had one daughter, also called Agnes, whose birthday was the very day that Veryan and his friend spent upon the Thames. She was eighteen that day. She had blue eyes, fair hair, a lithe lissom figure, a joyous birdlike voice.

Paul Veryan had never seen her or heard of her.

Had he ever seen or heard of the stately young lady who is walking up and down in front of a superb edifice standing on a slope of the Surrey hills? That edifice, ladies and gentlemen, is the famous Azure Academy, whereat girls of all colours are, for a hundred a year or so, turned a charming cerulean hue. To the Lady Principal of this most illustrious establishment I hope hereafter to introduce you; meanwhile I have only to mention the fine tall girl who is taking a constitutional on the terrace. Aurora Elmore is second in command; she is a figure fit to be taken by a great sculptor as a model for the huntress Artemis. You can see by every movement that she is full of vigour and energy; her eye is keen, yet thoughtful;

she looks like a woman meant to take an important place in the world. Is she to be M. P. in the first epicene Parliament? Who knows?

Driving a pair of pretty ponies along a pleasant Berkshire road, with a Lilliputian page in the back seat of the lightest of light phaetons, behold that tiny beauty, Lady Lucy Latimer. You know Lord Latimer, of course, that tall gaunt man, of ancient descent, and of wondrous personal antiquity. Burke and Debrett and Dod have almost gone mad in their attempts to ascertain when Latimer was born. He was about town when Savage Landor was at Rugby, before Singleton Copley was called to the bar. He has married four times, and Lady Loo is his youngest daughter by his last wife, who has of course been dead some years. Indeed, people say that he has thoughts

of marrying again, and has a fancy for a young creature about the age of this fairy-like little daughter of his. Any way, the old patrician, who has seen more life than most men, who has fought on the battle-field and in duels, who has won and lost fortunes, looks as full of energy as the youngest of us all. Well, Lady Lucy is driving to-day to lunch with a friend, and very pretty and piquant she looks, as the soft south wind tosses backwards her dark thick curls.

Now there is only this to be said further—my heroine is either Miss Brabazon, or Miss Elmore, or Lady Lucy. Paul Ver-yan has been introduced to neither of them. All three are in the betting. Ladies and gentlemen, 'pon honour I have not the slightest idea which is to occupy the important position of heroine.

However, my promise is kept. I would

rather be torn to pieces by wild horses than fail to fulfil a promise. My heroine is introduced to you, and I sincerely hope you like her.

CHAPTER V.

MISS BRABAZON'S BIRTHDAY.

"'Tis her *fête*—so although retrospection is pleasant,
While we muse on her Past, we must think of her Present."

FAIR-HAIRED Agnes Brabazon came down very early that autumn morning to feed her swans. She was a very pretty picture as she stood, with the flush of morning on her face, looking over the immortal mere to where the trees of Curwen's Island dip their branches in its waters. She was eighteen: it is an age of vague visions, all delicious: pretty little Agnes saw nothing but happiness in the future. Yet a little cloud, the exact size of a man's hand,

was even then creeping slowly above the horizon.

Ruddy Colonel Brabazon was shaving himself at the window of his room, and looking down upon his child at the remote end of the little lawn. And, as he looked at her, he cut his illustrious chin; and, being an old soldier, naturally swore a little.

But why did he cut his chin? The answer is simple. The old Colonel, as I have intimated, had a heart somewhere in his battered body; and, as he looked at Agnes feeding her swans, with the bright light falling on her sunny curls, the tears came into his unaccustomed eyes at the idea of his darling daughter's going away as the wife of a stranger.

And why, it may be asked, should this melancholy notion come into the

veteran's cranium? For this reason: Mrs. Brabazon had decided that Agnes should marry, decided whom she should marry—ay, and that very day intended to bring the happy man face to face with her daughter, as her future lord and master.

"She is very young," he ejaculated to his wife, who was engaged in some mystery of the toilet.

"So was I when we married, *dear*," said Mrs. Brabazon. "And Mr. Lanyon is just the right age for her—only ten years older. I am sure she will like him."

"I am not at all sure of it," said the Colonel. "I'll be hanged if I like him!" But this was said to himself.

Indeed, I am not surprised at the Colonel's dislike for Adolphus Lanyon, Esquire. He was principal partner in the famous drapery firm of Lanyon and

Jones, having inherited his father's share in that excellent business. His father, worthy man, had stuck to the shop to the very last week of his life; and though he had built himself a splendid place in Surrey, and kept up a princely establishment, was perfectly affable to the humblest of his customers. But he meant Adolphus to be a gentleman, and sent him to Eton and Christchurch; and if to waste money as if it were water, is the accomplishment of a gentleman, "Linen" Lanyon (as they called him at Oxford) fully established his claim to the title.

It so happened that the young draper came into his principality in the very year and month which also gave a certain young duke command of his ducal revenues. It was a race between duke and draper. Both went on the turf, and

both kept race-horses and other beautiful creatures; both scratched the one and had *esclandres* with the other. The Duke of St. James had, I suppose—at least, nominally—five or six times the income of the draper of St. James's Street; but then he had also half a dozen castles and halls and mansions in the three kingdoms (not to mention a château in Normandy), each requiring a whole army of servitors of all grades. The draper had only his Surrey estate and his shop; this latter, managed with untiring energy by the respectable Mr. Jones, was an ever-increasing property. I think, indeed, that the splendid notoriety of that noble Lucullus and Lothario who was head of the firm, rather tended to increase the patronage accorded by the ladies of the aristocracy. Anyway, in the matter of mad extravagance, the draper ran the

duke so close, that to this hour it is uncertain which threw away his money with the most lavish hand.

However, the duke was the first to get into difficulty; whereupon his cousin, Lord Sangfroid, that noblest of all peers and politicians, made the young man marry the great heiress, Miss Belinda Bullion, and sent them abroad in a steam-yacht, on a long honeymoon tour. About the same time, the famous Adolphus Lanyon was physically knocked up; he began to be conscious of the existence of his liver; he lost appetite, and turned yellow, and would have given half his fortune for health. So he went to my friend, Dr. Montagu, who administered blue pill and advice.

"Breaking stones would do you good," said the abrupt doctor; "or you might hire yourself as hodman to a bricklayer,

or try the paviour's rammers, or work your passage to New York before the mast. But I see you won't do either; so I can only advise you to travel and be temperate. Walk as much as you can; ride on horseback for a change; row, if you know how; avoid railways; stick to a sensible diet."

Lanyon acted on this advice—at least to some extent; whence it happened that he turned up at the Royal Hotel, Bowness. Here Colonel Brabazon and the draper met—for the old Colonel often smoked his evening cigar at Ullock's. They did not assimilate; but Lanyon, rowing on the lake, had noted our flaxen-haired Agnes on the quiet emerald lawn, and felt disposed to make acquaintance with that charming maiden. So he got introduced to Mrs. Brabazon at an evening party at Storrs; and, when she heard that this was

indeed "the rich Mr. Lanyon," she was only too anxious to invite him to her house. He came, he saw; I can't say he conquered, for Agnes, with the girl's infallible instinct, thought him a cad. Agnes the elder would have thought the same at her daughter's age; but somehow or other, middle-aged ladies with marriageable daughters are blind, either wilfully or otherwise, to the defects of men with plenty of money.

Father, mother, and daughter are in the breakfast-room at last. On the breakfast table are presents suitable to a young lady of eighteen. Everybody loves little Agnes who knows her; and, while papa has provided coral bracelets, and mamma a brooch of aquamarine (looking like a spoonful of seawater set in gold), the old gardener had managed to obtain for her a delicious little bouquet of hederifoliate cyclamen and

pale violets of Parthenope and the tremulous maiden-hair fern. Miss in her teens was delighted: little did she think that the old English word "teen" signifieth vexation and trouble. Neither had Lucretius nor experience taught her that

" Medio de forte leporum,
Surgit amari aliquid."

She was to learn it this day.

For by-and-by, the joyous breakfast over, and the old Colonel having started to smoke a cigar on the road to the Ferry, Mrs. Brabazon became confidential with her daughter, and told her that she had a nicer birthday gift for her than any she had received. And, thinking that she was introducing the subject with much delicacy, she gradually led up to the fact that the gift in question was Adolphus Lanyon, the most opulent of drapers!

To Mrs. Brabazon's surprise, her daughter seemed very much the reverse of delighted.

Little Agnes had only twice or thrice seen the illustrious draper, and she did not like him a bit. The idea of his being her husband came upon her with the effect of a horribly disgusting nightmare. The idea of having *any man* as a husband must be a terrible shock to a virgin soul of eighteen. Fancy how the young creature has dwelt apart, in her dainty innocent maidenhood, remote from everything gross, delicate and fragile as a flower. It is not given to a man to comprehend the feelings of a young girl; nor is it always given to adult woman to remember those feelings. Agnes would have shrunk timidly from the notion of any husband; but the idea of Mr. Lanyon, whose vulgarity and purse-proud impudence had revolted

her, caused her to shudder—ay, for the first time in her life, caused her to rebel against the maternal authority.

There was a scene between mother and daughter. Colonel Brabazon, lounging down by the Ferry with his cigar, knew well that there must be a scene, and moodily wondered how it would end. I am not going to describe it. Mrs. Brabazon was resolute: but Agnes had a latent vein of obstinacy, inherited from her mother, and showed that she likewise could be resolute. So the interview ended rather stormily; the mother announcing to her daughter that Mr. Lanyon would call at three o'clock, and that she should expect her to receive him civilly.

And then they parted—Mrs. Brabazon to call on the Rector's wife for a gossip, and her daughter to bathe her reddened eyes and cool her forehead with Farina's

fragrant fluid, and foster rebellious thoughts against papa and mamma, and the utterly-intolerable Lanyon.

CHAPTER VI.

ARETHUSA.

“ O save me! O guide me!
And bid the deep hide me—
For he grasps me now by the hair!”

WHEN the eager Lanyon called by appointment on Mrs. Brabazon, he met with disappointment. Not unusual this, where womankind are in question. Mrs. Brabazon was informed on returning from the Rectory that Miss Agnes had gone for a walk; but she received her visitor cheerfully, fully expecting her daughter to return before he left. Agnes did nothing of the kind. The magnificent draper remained for about an hour and a half, and then went away without

seeing the little rebel, who did not return until nearly the dinner hour. Her mother was prepared to scold her, but Agnes made dolorous complaint of suffering from a dreadful headache, and was permitted to take refuge in her own room. She professed inability to come down to dinner, and scarcely touched the delicate bit of chicken which was sent up to her. It was rather a gloomy affair, that *tête-à-tête* dinner, for the Colonel and his wife. There were servants in the room, so that they could not talk of the subject nearest to their hearts; and when coffee had been served, Mrs. Brabazon went upstairs to see her daughter, while the Colonel, lighting a big regalia, lounged sulkily down towards the Royal Hotel.

There it was his fate to meet the young gentleman who aspired to be his son-in-

law. Other gentlemen of Bowness were present, and the talk flowed hazily, smokily on, about the events of the day. Political argument grew high, and somewhat warm. The Colonel was a Tory of the old school; rather puzzled by that political meteor Disraeli, but with a very firm belief in Henley and Newdegate. The draper, as behoved a representative of that modern enlightenment which culminates in a big shop, was, of course, Gladstonite to the backbone. He believed in the "people's William" with that fine unreasoning faith which has recently astonished everybody who takes the trouble to think. So he led the van of nicotine argument with pæans in favour of that great statesman; while the old Colonel grunted dissent from his American chair, and occasionally puffed out his smoke in a manner expressive of utter

contempt. It was not a pleasant evening. Few things are less instructive or less gratifying than the political discussions of people who know nothing about politics—the most difficult science in the world, yet the only science which you are supposed to understand without studying its elements. And when, as of late, it has become a mere battle of names—one party making an idol of Gladstone, and calling Disraeli all manner of villanous names, and the other just reversing the process—it surely is, to men of sense, the most idiotic waste of time to talk politics at all.

The Colonel went home with an augmented distaste for the draper. The draper, when everybody else had gone away, ordered the waiter to take to his room ample supplies of brandy and seltzer water, and sat for some hours moodily

smoking, drinking, and meditating—the last somewhat after the following fashion :

“He’s a cantankerous old ass, that Colonel. When I get little Agnes down to Lanyon Hall”—the name of his pleasant Surrey mansion—“I won’t have that old foggy prowling about the place. He’s a rank Tory, eaten up with prejudice. The old lady’s not so bad, but I don’t mean to see much of either of them. Can’t understand why a fellow who’s lost his own father and mother should adopt his wife’s. No, no, Miss Agnes, when I get hold of you you’ll have to cut your relations; see them for week in a year or so, but not more. She’s a pretty little bird enough, my Agnes, but I don’t mean to encourage the old cock and hen.”

Thus elegantly and unselfishly soliloquised the young draper, till his brain grew muddled with tobacco and brandy,

and he thought it advisable to go to bed.

Meanwhile, the "old cock and hen" were grumbling away at one another about the projected marriage. And where was his "pretty little bird?" Not in her room. No; she had flown from her nest, that terrified little Agnes, and had walked—there was a brilliant moonlight—to Windermere Station. Muffled up in a cloak, she attracted no attention on the platform, for there were few travellers, and, with a courage that surprised herself, she took a ticket for London by the latest train. Her notion was a wild one. Her father had an aunt in London—a stately old personage, who dwelt in Berkeley Square, who had always been very kind to her, and she determined to go straight to this old lady, and tell her the great trouble which had suddenly arrived. Her mother's evident determination appalled

her; Mr. Lanyon disgusted her; there was no hope from her father. So, with the sudden boldness of fear, the terrified girl took flight to the only other creature from whom she could hope for aid and consolation. She had easily escaped from her home, when everybody was in bed—people don't lock up their houses in the Lake district.

By the way, how easy it is, in these days of railway and steamship, for the rebel to escape from the tyrant, and to put a few hundred miles of land and water between himself and those who have become intolerable to him! True, the telegraph has an awkward habit of forestalling and intercepting fugitives; but a few hours' start renders even electric communication powerless. In the old times of mail-coaches and post-chaises, pursuit was comparatively easy; now, all

the world is travelling on the iron highway, and it is marvellous easy to lose oneself in the moving crowd, and to baffle the most acute pursuer. Moreover, the idea of far travel is now so familiar; when people in Yorkshire or Devonshire made their wills before starting for London, the ordinary imagination was appalled at the notion of getting beyond one's native parish. If we are to believe half that we hear and see, romantic young people—ay, and eccentric elderly ones—are in the habit every day of taking sudden flight, and trying to cut the Gordian knot of circumstance. Vain the attempt, doubtless; those who do such rash deeds jump out of the frying-pan into the fire. The Fates may be conciliated, but you cannot out-manceuvre them.

Agnes Brabazon met with no adventure on her way to London. She was alone

in a first-class carriage ; the train was a fast one ; she was carried rapidly through the moonlit night. Before she was twenty miles from home, she wished she had never left it, poor child ; but the irrevocable deed was done. She cried and slept through the eight long hours, awaking suddenly, with a start of wonder, with a feeling of inexplicable terror, when the swift train stopped ; then, remembering that she was not in her quiet bed-chamber by Windermere, but flying at full speed towards London—flying, foolish little girl, from a mother who loved her, and wished (according to her lights) to make her happy ; flying from her dear old father, who, she knew, would be half mad with anxiety. It is impossible to describe the child's remorse. Gladly would she have returned at once, but she had not the courage to do it.

At about eight o'clock in the morning she stood on the Euston platform. She was faint, weary, purposeless. The hurried crowd of ordinary travellers (if there be any ordinary travellers in this extraordinary world) had all left the terminus, and Agnes still waited there, uncertain what to do next. By-and-by she was accosted by a kind-hearted porter.

"Are you waiting for anybody, Miss?"

"No," she said, faintly. "I have travelled a long way, and am tired. I am going to Berkeley Square."

Railway porters see a good deal of the world; so perhaps this particular one discerned that our little Agnes was a runaway. If he did, he was as courteously reticent as though he had been Bayard himself. Rightly judging that she wanted breakfast, but would not care to face the magnificence of the Euston Hotel,

he took her to a respectable coffee-shop in the neighbourhood. She contrived to take a little coffee and toast, though it almost choked her; for at that very moment, she could not help thinking, the servants were preparing breakfast at Bowness, and in half an hour or so her absence must be discovered. She was a very naughty girl, it must be admitted; but already she was severely punished for her naughtiness.

As she grew somewhat calmer, she came to the conclusion that the right thing to do was to go straight to her great aunt, and confess her wickedness, and ask to be sent home at once. So penitent did she already feel, that she was half inclined to offer to marry Mr. Lanyon, in obedience to her mother's behest; but whenever she thought of that illustrious young draper, an involuntary

shudder came over her, and she felt that this was too great a sacrifice. Somewhat refreshed by her scanty meal, she started in a cab for Berkeley Square.

Poor little Agnes had forgotten, when she suddenly resolved on flight, that Miss Anastasia Brabazon was seldom to be found in London in the autumn. That old lady was a frequenter of watering-places and country-seats; she had select circles of friends in Bath, Cheltenham, Leamington, Brighton, Scarborough; she was welcome, by reason of her blood and style, her wealth and courtly talk, at many a pleasant mansion in many a shire. For Miss Anastasia, though immensely old, was full of vivacity; she was a charming relic of a brilliant past; she had been a beauty at Queen Charlotte's court, and it was said that she had even touched the corpulent Prince's

sensitive heart. Anyway, she was a mistress of Court history and recondite anecdote, and a great authority on all points of etiquette; and in many of the pleasantest country houses in England, not the least pleasant suite of rooms was reserved for "that dear old Miss Brabazon."

Foolish Agnes! to suppose that she should find Aunt Anastasia in Berkeley Square, when all the world was out of town.

"Miss Brabazon, miss," said an ancient female that opened the door, "is down at Carysfort Court, miss. Leastways, that's where we have orders to forward letters. Mr. Mulliner, that's the butler, miss, was here last week, and gave the orders."

That was all Agnes could learn—Carysfort Court, Surrey, was the address of the letters; but how you got to Carysfort

Court, the elderly female knew not. Agnes, determined to find her aunt in this desperate necessity, conjectured that it must be somewhere on the South Western line, and ordered the cabman to drive to Waterloo.

There was no great difficulty in obtaining the necessary information at the terminus. Everybody knew Carysfort Court. Lord Carysfort's tall slender figure was pretty well known to every official at Waterloo. There were some horses going down for him by the very next train. It was just seven miles from X. station.

But at this point, Agnes Brabazon encountered a more serious difficulty. Her money was running short. She had not calculated how much she might want; and had fully expected to find her aunt in London. Having inquired the fare to X., she was horrified to find that, even

travelling second-class, she had not quite enough left to take her there. No third-class train went for many hours. What could she do?

She sat in a corner of the ladies' waiting-room, sadly revolving this momentous question. Doubtless her countenance betrayed that she was in trouble, for she at once attracted the attention of a tall young lady, who had just entered the room. I suppose the majority of young ladies would not care to interfere with their distressed sisters; but the newcomer was a young lady *sui generis*, and, after watching Miss Brabazon for a few minutes, she resolved to speak to her. With her, action followed immediately on resolve.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AZURE ACADEMY.

"Sweet girl-graduates in their golden hair."

AGNES BRABAZON was only too glad to find a friend in her difficulty. She did not tell the exact truth to the good Samaritan in petticoats who accosted her (and who was no other than Miss Aurora Elmore, heretofore mentioned), but that young lady had some knowledge of the sex, and made a shrewd guess at our little friend's actual disposition

"I am going to X. station by this train," she said to Agnes. "I am a governess in a large ladies' school close by the station. You can come and stay there, if

you will, until we ascertain whether your aunt is at Carysfort Court. It would be unpleasant for you to drive over and find she had not arrived."

This notion had not occurred to Agnes. A wild impulse had driven her to this escapade; but she already perceived that she had acted foolishly and wickedly, and was heartily glad to be guided by a stronger mind than her own.

"I have been very, very silly!" she sobbed, with difficulty refraining from a downright cry. "I am so much obliged to you. You are so good. I will do exactly what you tell me."

So Aurora Elmore, who had been in town for a few hours' shopping, got a ticket for the naughty little fugitive, and took complete possession of her; and, between Waterloo and X., contrived to obtain from her an emended and tolerably accurate

narrative of what had occurred. And the very first thing she did on her arrival there was to telegraph to Colonel Brabazon that his daughter was safe.

The Azure Academy stood, as I have said, on a pleasant slope of the Surrey hills. You could see it from the railway as you passed—a fine collegiate quadrangular edifice, with cloisters and lawns, and a noble square tower. You would never guess it was a ladies' school. Nor indeed was it, in the ordinary sense. It was an establishment in which were taught all arts and sciences, all languages and literature, which are usually monopolized by men. There was a High School, a Middle School, and a Lower School; and the pupils in the first of these, in addition to their own studies, had to do most of the teaching in the second and third.

The Lady Principal, Miss Priscilla Bettes-

worth, was a thin old lady, with a keen benevolent countenance. She was a capital classic and mathematician; had published translations of *Comus* into Greek iambics, and of selections from Herrick into Latin hendecasyllabics; had also written treatises on astronomy, optics, trilinear coördinates, and quaternions. The inheritrix of a large fortune, she had devoted it to the education of women; had built this superb college; had worked at it resolutely for years, until now it was a complete and triumphant success, and pupils had to be entered on the books many terms before they could be received.

Miss Elmore and her unexpected guest walked from the station to the Academy. There was a four-in-hand omnibus with Lord Carysfort's crest upon it waiting at the station; but it drove away with only servants and packages. Agnes Brabazon was,

naturally enough, in a nervous tremulous state; but her stronger-minded companion cheered her up; and she advanced with some show of courage towards the famous home of feminine erudition. In the grounds were to be seen groups of girls of all ages, walking, running, playing at various games. Only three colours were noticeable in their dresses. All the pupils of the Lower School wore white, those of the Middle School red, those of the High School blue, the dresses being all of the same pattern. Our little Agnes, who, after her sufferings and sudden fright, began to think herself quite a woman, regarded them with mixed feelings. She envied them their innocence. They had never been wicked runaways like herself. But she had, I fancy, a slight contempt for their ignorance of the world. They had never been wooed by an unwelcome

suitors, or rebelled against a tyrannous mamma. What woman, since Eve, has wholly disliked her first bite of the apple of knowledge of good and evil.

Aurora led Agnes through a spacious hall, hung round with pictures. In one corner of this noble room there stood (positively!) a billiard-table; at the further end of it was a great organ. Miss Elmore opened a door into a corridor of considerable length, and introduced her companion to a pretty little parlour, with a wide window overlooking the hills.

"This is my private room," she said. "You must have a biscuit and a glass of sherry. There, now make yourself comfortable, while I arrange about sending to Carysfort Court."

Presently she returned, in company with the Lady Principal, whose bounden duty it of course was (according to the ethics

of schoolmistresses) to lecture this young truant. I am sorry to say she didn't do it.

"You must stay here to-night, my dear," she said, "in any case. I have sent a messenger to Carysfort Court with a note to your aunt, in case she should be there; but it will be getting late by the time he returns, so I have suggested your remaining till the morning. And I have written to your papa. So now you have nothing to do but rest—Miss Elmore will take care of you."

Which Miss Elmore did accordingly. Very shortly a nice little dinner was served for the two young ladies—just a little clear soup, and a mutton cutlet, and a pudding of the most delicious character (Miss Bettesworth had classes in cooking), yet of the simplest material; and Agnes quite recovered her spirits

under this kind treatment, and felt able to go down at eight o'clock to prayers in the hall.

Two hundred pure young voices singing vespers is a thing most sweet to hear. The great organ was tenderly touched by a skilful hand. The way to sleep was paved by music and prayer. Surely, in all but duration, sleep and death are one; and he who, refreshed with a long night's rest, awakes to hear the song of birds, to see the sunrise in the east, to breathe the fresh pure air of early morn, has some slight foretaste of what the Great Awakening will be.

Our truant Agnes went happily to bed, under Miss Elmore's guidance, having previously learnt that her great-aunt was not expected at Carysfort Court for a week. Lucky for her that she had fallen into such kind hands. Rigid readers may

think that Miss Bettesworth was *too* kind to the runaway—that she ought to have lectured her, and kept her on bread and water till her parents' pleasure was known. But all schoolmistresses are not ogresses, and there is a discipline of love as well as a discipline of fear.

CHAPTER VIII.

THROUGH SURREY.

“The silver streaming Thames,
Whose rushy bank, the which his river hems,
Is painted all with variable flowers.”

HAVING introduced to one another two of the three ladies from whom my heroine is to be chosen, allow me to leave the reader to conjecture whether either of them deserve that high position, and to return to Paul Veryan and his friend. It need hardly be said that they passed a very jolly evening, with much smoke and a moderate allowance of stimulating fluid. At six the next morning our friend Paul, who, like most London Bo-

hemians, loved late hours and lazy matutine dreams, heard himself noisily summoned from without. The summoning voice mingled with his visions. What was it? It seemed unlike what he usually heard, awaking imperfectly in the the street of Sarum. Was it the German band, or the man with the tum-tum, or Punch and Judy, or the itinerant vegetable vendor, or the wandering athletes? It sounded unlike any of these. Not for some minutes did he remember where he was, or recognize Westbrook's hearty voice. Suddenly the sense of his situation flashed upon him; he sprang out of bed, and threw the window open upon the dewy freshness of the lawn, the river magically beautiful through the autumnal mist, the trees dripping with bright spherules, and Westbrook, flannel-trowsered and shirted, with a rough towel round

his neck, eager for his dip in the Thames.

"Come along, old boy. It's a divine morning. We'll get out in the punt, and take a header, and by the time we're dressed breakfast will be ready."

That pleasant prediction was fulfilled. As they sat smoking after breakfast, Westbrook said,

"Paul, my boy, I'm going to take possession of you for a while. I am going to walk into the heart of the county: you must come with me. You don't know what wild country one gets into with a few hours' walking. Now, don't make any objections, for I mean you to come."

"Oh! very well," replied Veryan. "I have always had to submit to somebody or something. In my early days it was a maiden aunt of fierce and acrid temperament; now it's my friend Westbrook. But

I forgot—Harington's got a new journal coming out. If I stay away from town he'll complete the staff without me."

"Pshaw! Write and tell him you're kept in the country by important political business. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has a place down this way—tell him you're going to call. Tom's the most inventive fellow in the world; the least he can do is to believe other people's inventions."

"Which he doesn't do—though he believes some of his own most fervently. To tell the simple truth, I am not quite so certain of his starting this paper as he is himself. I'll trust myself to you, and wait for a despatch from him."

"Which, if it comes at all," said Westbrook, "will come like a thunderclap, and be worded as sonorously as if it were an imperial declaration of war."

"Yes, I'd give a trifle to see Tom in the editorial throne for a few months, just to make a study of his style! What orders he'd give to Poole! How he'd swagger about the clubs! How he'd give all his lady friends boxes at theatres, and little suppers afterwards! There never was such a boy to pour out his small beer with a magnificent air of the effusion of champagne."

"You are in a cynical mood, old fellow. The fresh Surrey air will blow away your spleen. Tom's a very good sort, notwithstanding his slight egoisms."

"Agreed. Tom's all right, only he riles me now and then. How about our walk? When shall we start?"

It does not take two bachelors very long to prepare for a walking tour. Our friends slept that night full thirty miles away from Westbrook's house, at a quaint

little inn, with a row of great elm-trees in front of it, looking over a village green.

There is something friendly and home-like in the village greens that are found in many parts of England. The one which Veryan and Westbrook reached that bright autumn afternoon had a church on one side, a dissenting chapel on another, two or three comfortable houses, and many small cottages, each with an enclosed garden. Some boys were just going home with their cricket-bats and stumps.

"I suppose," said Veryan, "when we get more civilized, the girls of the village will be playing croquet here. I wonder if the worthy landlord has anything eatable for supper?"

"Plenty to eat, gentlemen," said a voice in the doorway—and behold, the landlord. A burly man was he, broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced, with legs like pedestals. A

man who weighed twenty stone, and was rather proud of it than otherwise.

“Good entertainment for man and beast,” the worthy host continued. “There’s a fire lighted in the parlour, gentlemen, for it gets chilly these autumn evenings; so, if you’ll walk in, I’ll be happy to take your orders.”

“What have you got?” asked Westbrook. “Anything will do, so long as there’s enough of it. We’ve been living on ale since breakfast.”

“There are worse things to live upon,” said the landlord; “but it’s as well to have something solid sometimes.”

Something solid turned up in due course, in the form of some fine trout, and a couple of roast ducks to follow. Washed down with ample tankards of excellent home-brewed ale, the two travellers voted that their supper was fit for an Emperor.

Supper over, it occurred to them that they would smoke their pipes in company ; so they found out the public room, an old-fashioned apartment, where a considerable number of people were winding up the night convivially. It was a village gathering. Everybody around the green who did not affect too great a respectability was wont to finish his evening in this room. If he were a coward, he went home and told his wife that he had been engaged on important business ; if a true man, that he had been out with his friends and spent a jolly evening. Women don't like a man much the worse for telling the truth.

The place of honour this night—a cosy arm-chair in the warmest corner—was occupied by an individual whose position in life it would be hard to determine. He wasn't a gentleman, nor a tradesman, nor

a farmer. He certainly wasn't a cad. His dress was homely, but good. His talk was full of that racy quality which has been named mother-wit. He was an original without doubt; and in days when originality is rare, a man of this class is to be prized. We have fallen upon times when too many people are cast in the same mould; when your friend Jones the stock-broker is exactly like your friend Smith the wine-merchant, only that the latter is perhaps a trifle fruitier. Hence anything original, or even that resembles originality, is well worth study.

"Glad to welcome you, gentlemen," said that personage. "You have fallen on hospitable quarters. Pedestrian tourists through Surrey, probably; you couldn't select a finer county. There's nothing so high as Mont Blanc, and nothing so hol-

low as the centre of Vesuvius, but it is a charming county for all that."

"You know the county well," said Westbrook, enquiringly.

"I know all counties of England well," he rejoined. "I have been a vagabond all my life, and enjoyed it. This same Surrey, gentlemen, is a shire in which the gardens are more profitable than the fields. Do you remember what Fuller says? O the incredible profit by digging of ground! For, though it be confessed that the plough beats the spade out of distance for speed almost as much as the press beats the pen, yet, what the spade wants in the quantity of the ground it manureth, it recompenseth with the plenty of the fruit it yieldeth, that which is set multiplying a hundred fold more than that which is sown. Surrey, gentlemen, is *Spadeshire*. See how, about Mitcham

and Carshalton, they grow all manner of chymic herbs. Where will you get your lavender water, your Hungary water, if Surrey stops the supply? Where will you get such asparagus, such salads of lettuce and endive? The spade is Surrey's weapon of war."

"You talk like a book," said Paul Veryan, quietly puffing his short pipe. "But there is some wild country to be seen, is there not?"

"Wild country! Ay, sir, though there is nothing to match your hills in the north, there is some beautiful wild country. You can see into a dozen counties from the top of Leith Hill. You can see the sea one way and London another. And there are plenty of open commons, plenty of trout-streams, plenty of places that seem as if they couldn't possibly be less than two or three hundred miles from

CHAPTER IX.

LORD LATIMER.

"Confound their politics!"

JOHN BULL.

THREE persons stood on the summit of a sandy hill in Surrey—a hill crowned by a chapel, and looking down upon a beautifully watered valley. They had exerted themselves considerably in reaching this height—a paltry six-hundred above the sea level—so they were resting on a grassy knoll, and smoking placidly, and making what they thought philosophical reflections.

"Pretty village down there," said Westbrook.

"Very," said Veryan.

"It was intended by Providence for a calm retreat," said John Eeles, their friend the previous night, "but man has turned the Eden into an abomination of desolation."

"Well, it looks very nice," said Veryan, lazily.

"And if there's a tolerable inn down there," said Westbrook, "one might do worse than have some bread and cheese and beer."

Meanwhile the indignant Eeles puffed at his short brier-wood pipe.

"Do you see those mills?" he asked, after a pause. "Do you know what abominations they manufacture there? Paper and powder, gentlemen. Paper for a great London newspaper, and powder for the Government? Could anything more completely desecrate this delicious valley—a valley in whose streams Eve might have

washed her innocent limbs? Paper and powder!"

"You object to newspapers?" said Westbrook, interrogatively.

"Worse than guns, sir; worse than guns. Better have the body destroyed than the mind perverted. The *Times*——"

"Look at that!" exclaimed Veryan, suddenly interrupting him.

A pillar of white cloud had arisen in the valley beneath. It rested for a moment in sight, casting a black shadow behind it. Then there suddenly followed a roar, almost deadening the hearing, as if a hundred batteries had been fired simultaneously. The quiet which followed the tremendous outburst of sound was appalling by the contrast.

"Those confounded powder-mills are always doing mischief!" said somebody behind them.

Veryan looked round, and perceived a tall thin old gentleman, who was calmly examining the scene through a gold-rimmed eye-glass. The notion struck our hero that he might have been the presiding fiend of the catastrophe.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he proceeded to say. "This may be styled a fortunate concurrence of circumstances. You might climb this hill a good many thousand times to look at the view without having a powder-mill blown up to heighten the effect."

Westbrook looked disgusted at the old gentleman's cynicism, but said nothing. Veryan proposed that they should descend the hill, and see if they could be of any service.

"Quite useless," said Eeles. "What possible good could we do? Two or three people are blown to pieces, no

doubt; we can't put them together again. And what are two or three workmen in comparison with the hundreds of thousands that are wilfully destroyed by that villanous mixture?"

"You object to war, sir?" said the stranger, interrogatively looking at him through his eye-glass.

"I think it is a devilish business," said Eeles earnestly. "I would hang all your Cæsars and Napoleons and Wellingtons and Napiers!"

"You would fight yourself, I fancy," said the other, "if anybody interfered with you. "Yours is hardly a peaceful temper. But I really think there is much to be said in favour of war. It furnishes the only occupation which befits a gentleman."

"Are not politics and law fit occupations for gentlemen?" asked Veryan.

"And what do you say of the Church?"

"The less said of it the better. To tell the truth, I think it scarcely possible for an ecclesiastic or a politician or a lawyer to be honest. A soldier may."

"But war," said Eeles, "is cruel and profitless."

"So, from the same point of view, is fox-hunting. Admit the cruelty, if you will—though I'd rather be shot in battle than starve in the streets of London—but war is certainly far from profitless. It makes men brave and strong; it clears barbarism out of the way, and gives civilization its first impulse; it is the thunderstorm of society's atmosphere."

"One may have such thunderstorms too often," said Westbrook.

"No doubt," replied the stranger. "However, as my opinions are rather peculiar on this topic, suppose we change

it. We can all agree in admitting and admiring the beauty of this county of Surrey. You are exploring it, gentlemen, it would appear?—so, likewise, am I. Unluckily, not being so young as yourselves, I am unable to be entirely a pedestrian; I have a carriage below in the valley, and can offer you a light luncheon, if you feel disposed to descend that way.”

The offer was accepted; the curiously-assorted party passed through the woods that clothed the opposite side of the hill—woods of yew, whose deep green foliage contrasted picturesquely with the red sandstone visible at intervals through the soil. At the foot of the hill, in the shadow of a clump of tall beech-trees, stood a private omnibus, with an earl’s coronet on the panel. The horses were feeding in the shade; servants were opening hampers on the turf. A clear trout-stream

wound along the valley, and on its margin could be seen sauntering an elegant female figure. Altogether, the scene had a satisfactory effect upon the wayfarers, and Westbrook said to our friend Paul—

“*Si sapis, æstivo recubans te proluet vitro.*”

“I find this,” observed the old gentleman, “a pleasant way of seeing a little of the country. Piccadilly supplies me with wine and comestibles, and although English country inns are for the most part uncivilized, yet we manage usually to get pretty fair suppers and beds and breakfasts. I shall stay to-night at the ‘White Hart’ at Reigate, an excellent inn, where they know me. You can actually get fish for dinner at the ‘White Hart.’”

“But I suppose their cheapest claret is seven or eight shillings a bottle?” said Veryan.

"I don't know. I always drink my own wine."

A very pleasant pic-nic luncheon ensued. The stranger was Lord Latimer; with him was his daughter Lady Lucy, heretofore casually mentioned. When the party had tried a Perigord pie, and the ham of a Spanish wild boar fattened on vipers, and refreshed themselves with a little Pomard and Clicquot, the conversation became agreeable.

"I don't know," observed the Earl, amid some desultory converse upon the oinologic science, "which province I prefer for its productions, Burgundy or Champagne. Indeed, a clever young poet, whom I once patronized—he was very ungrateful, for he turned Radical, and wrote pasquinades against me as an abominable old Tory—wrote a song on this very topic, the result of some hints

of mine. Do you remember it, Lucy?"

"Yes, papa," said the piquant young lady. "Shall I sing it?"

Of course there was an affirmative acclamation; and thus the gay chanson ran:—

BLONDE AND BRUNETTE.

"There's a beautiful blonde for whom
I have been mad in my time full oft:
O her kiss hath a sweet perfume!
O her voice is divinely soft!
Sweet it is her waist to clasp:
Strongly she mankind can grasp.
On my honour I yet am fond
Of that same peerless piquant blonde.

"There is also a sweet brunette,
Years ago beloved by me:
Purple suns that in autumn set
Have not rarer hues than she.
O to possess her is joy and power!
She, of brunettes the very flower,
Hath a divinely dainty breath:
Faith, I shall love her until my death.

*"For the joyous blonde is Champagne, you see:
And the mellow brunette is Burgundy."*

The reckless rhyme, wedded to merry music, seemed to fill the air of that

autumn afternoon with exuberant gaiety. It added a zest to the wine.

"It might have been better done," said Lord Latimer. "Champagne and Burgundy are not bad types of two classes of women—those in whom gaiety and those in whom voluptuousness predominates. My minor poet might have developed the contrast more epigrammatically. However, he went over to the Radicals years ago, and I think they made him a tidewaiter."

And upon this they took to talking politics. Lord Latimer was a Tory of the high school, who regarded the people as made for the service of the aristocracy, and did not believe in the governing capacity of any save gentlemen of the very bluest blood. John Eeles was a rough and ready Radical, with a contempt for Kings and Lords, and a resolute belief

that not only was one man as good as another, but often (as the Irishman remarked) *better too*. He sincerely thought that pretty nearly every existing institution must be overturned before one could get their rights. Westbrook was an idealist, a Platonist perhaps I may say; but, having no practical connexion with politics, thought it best to take the world as it is, and not to pine for Utopia. As to Veryan, he cared little about it; never having interested himself in politics, he was prepared to accept the first theory that should happen to fascinate him.

Be not alarmed, reader: I will not bore you with a political discussion. Lord Latimer and Eeles had some sharp passages of arms; but the veteran nobleman's absolute mastery of his subject, his coolness and his wit, were too much for his opponent. Paul became quite a Tory for

the time, at any rate, and found himself warmly supporting Lord Latimer.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Veryan," said his lordship, "you should turn your attention to politics. There will be a warmly contested election at Oceanborough next week; one Radical retires to make way for another, and we shall try to win the seat. Come down and look on. I have a little place a couple of miles from Oceanborough, and shall be delighted to put you up for a few days."

Paul accepted.

CHAPTER X.

OCEANBOROUGH.

"Nullus in orbe sinus Baiis praelucet amoenia."

OCEANBOROUGH, as is well known to all the world, stretches for miles along the margin of the sea. Was there greater luxury or greater extravagance where, in the days of the Cæsars, Baiae stretched splendid suburbs toward Puteoli? The hungry sea has submerged Baiae; who can guess whether ten centuries hence there will be any record, any memory of Oceanborough?

That town, as may perhaps by some accident be known to a few of its patrician and pecunious frequenters, returns

two members to the House of Commons. Oceanborough seems specially designed to show what must happen when the better sort are indifferent to politics. Of course among its innumerable visitors there are many leaders of political life; but they know nothing of its affairs—they come to forget their earnest work, as they ride or drive beside its lucid waters. The political masters of Oceanborough are those who, employing and influencing large numbers of its proletarian population, guide them through their passion and their prejudice. Oceanborough is a charming place, where you meet the gayest society, where all life's luxuries are attainable, where the most sensitive Sybarite would scarcely have to complain of a crumpled rose-leaf; but, politically, it is a warning to England. Were the whole realm like it, we should soon have a democracy—with

the inevitable Cæsar or Cromwell to follow.

Paul Veryan's invitation to visit Lord Latimer was quite in earnest. The Earl did not permit him to forget it, but wrote to warn him of the election, and to tell him what train to travel by. His lordship often took a fancy to young men, whom he imagined the possessors of genius or talent; had indeed got one or two into Parliament, where they usually disappointed him by becoming Liberals.

Our hero found himself, one afternoon, alone in a railway *coupé*, smoking and meditating. He was on his way to Oceanborough. He was wondering how he should get on with the Earl; and especially how he should get on with Lady Lucy. It was an adventure, anyway. It was likely to be uncommonly pleasant so long as it lasted; but what could possibly come of it? Poor Paul had a con-

science, you see, and felt that he, of all men, was the last who ought to waste even a day in the indolent patrician atmosphere he was about to enter. However, he was in for it now, so he soothed his conscience with "the enchanted weed," and stimulated his political energy by carefully reading the *Spectator*. That capital journal had a brilliant article on the coming contest, of course treating the Tory candidate with easy contempt, and eulogizing his Radical opponent to the utmost. Paul Veryan felt almost a Radical himself by the time he reached Oceanborough.

But Lord Latimer's carriage awaited him at the station; and, as the high-actioned bays went off with an easy stride, he leaned back in the barouche as though to the manner born; and his relapse was not less rapid than his progress. A

pleasant drive along the cliffs, high above the sea, for about four miles, and Veryan had reached his destination. Lord Latimer's "little place" was called Caprice.

Caprice! An excellent name for it—as indeed for the majority of that nobleman's doings. A fantastic lodge, amid delicious lawns and gardens, with archways and colonnades, and turrets innumerable. Quite small; not above twenty bed-rooms; but as cosy and elegant as it was fantastic. When our hero found himself in a dressing-room as dainty as a boudoir, with a wood fire burning on an open hearth, and a warm bath getting ready for him as a matter of course, the sensuous element in his nature was excited, and he began to wish he had fifty thousand a year. What a change from the sordid chambers of Sarum Street!

Dinner at eight. He descended to the

drawing-room, a superb apartment, with carpets and curtains of snow, and the lightest of water-colour paintings set in ebony panels, and marble statues on ebony pedestals. All through the room was this strong contrast—marble and ivory, and snowy draperies against the ink-black wood. There were two gentlemen in the room, and but one lady—the heroine of that impromptu pic-nic—the Lady of Caprice.

One of the gentlemen was the Earl himself. The other was an uncommonly handsome young fellow, with a high forehead, brilliant eyes, a humorous mouth, and a superior black beard. Veryan was jealous of him on the instant.

However, they assimilated. Lady Lucy did not seem to be at all in love with Mr. Grant; indeed, the charming creature appeared little likely to be in love with anybody. She was as untameable as a

dragon-fly ; managed her father, whom nobody else had ever managed ; instilled a perfume of wayward womanhood into the Earl's infinite caprices ; coquetted gaily with everybody, but seemed never for a moment serious.

Grant, a yachting man, and a great friend of the Tory candidate, was full of that knowledge of men and things which travel alone can give. A young Ulysses, he took life easily ; listened to the song of the Sirens without being bound to the mast ; defied Circe without the aid of moly.

The dinner, for four only, was served on a round table in an octagon dining-room. Nothing like a round table for a small party ; it puts an end to all absurd questions of precedence, and enables everybody to see and chat with everybody else. Lord Latimer affected round tables and dumb waiters, and had servants in the room as seldom as

possible. Cabinet dinners, perchance, had taught him the habit.

"Shall we get Thorold in?" asked Grant of Lady Lucy.

"I'm sure I hope so," she replied. "The other man is a regular gorilla."

"I think you're ungrateful to the learned gorilla," said Lord Latimer. "Professor Goskett thinks that ladies should have votes. I have not seen that in our friend Thorold's programme."

"Well," she said, "I should like to have a vote, for the sake of being canvassed; but I certainly would not give it to that rather ugly and very prosy young gentleman."

"Ugliness sometimes shows manhood, and prosiness wisdom," remarked Paul.

"Excellent," said the Earl; "but young ladies prefer men who are handsome and foolish."

"You can't couple those epithets in regard to Thorold," said Grant. "He's a good-looking fellow, and a good-humoured one; but you should see how he manages his yacht, passengers as well as crew. We've had some wild fellows on board, but he keeps up discipline as if the *Iberia* were one of Her Majesty's ironclads. Now, I say that a fellow who can sail a yacht, and keep good order on board, can do anything."

"It is not a bad test," observed Lord Latimer, "though I would not accept it as final. But I really think Thorold has the making of an able politician in him; and I hope to see him oust the Professor, whose political crotchets are simply childish."

"Why does Claverton resign?" asked Veryan.

"It is some sort of party arrangement.

There is a fellow in the town, a great proprietor of public-houses, whom the Americans would call a 'wire-puller.' The indomitable thirst of the modern Briton makes him almost omnipotent. It is like the old sorites. He governs the publicans; the publicans govern the beer-drinkers; the beer-drinkers govern Oceanborough. I take it that, as his party in Pall Mall have reasons for wanting Goskett in Parliament, he has been requested to order Claverton to retire."

"Yes," said Grant; "and Claverton has obeyed, and they expected no opposition. If it had not been for Thorold, there would have been no opposition. People are afraid of this ultra-Radical place."

"What gives Thorold a chance?" inquired Veryan.

"His personal popularity," replied the Earl, "and the dislike of all moderate

men for the Professor. Goskett is an absolute democrat, who is suspected of looking on the Throne and the Church and the Lords as absurd anomalies at this period of our civilization. He is inoculated by the mania for change. He dogmatizes in an autocratic way, and contemptuously pooh-poohs anyone who ventures to differ from him. This carries weight with some people, but there are a great many others to whom it is simply offensive. Thorold, on the other hand, is the head of a great Manchester firm, founded by his grandfather. He spends a splendid income in a sensible way; is profuse without extravagance, and liberal without ostentation. He frankly tells the working men that he has sprung from among themselves; and they can see that as he is their own children may be. He is a living argument in proof of the healthiness of society as it

exists. His actions are logically more influential than his opponent's inexhaustible talk."

"And what manner of man is the sitting member?"

"Also a Radical, but a Radical without ideas. His name is Greene; his money was acquired by merchandise; he is big and burly, and good-tempered. In the House he is famous for emitting loud-lunged cheers at inopportune times. One can't help rather liking the man, and rather despising him."

"Well," interjaculated Lady Lucy, "I'm sure I hope Mr. Thorold will get in, and I've made myself quite hoarse with canvassing for him, and haven't had a single refusal; but I shall not be sorry when the election is over, for you gentlemen talk nothing but politics, and one can't get a moment for flirtation."

In the evening the drawing-room filled. The candidate came, looking extremely unlike a Manchester man. Several of his committeemen arrived also, for Lord Latimer was advising counsel throughout the election, and gave them many a valuable hint, some for a subtle, some for an audacious policy, drawn from his long experience. When they gathered into groups, with an appearance of preternatural wisdom, Lady Lucy left them to their own devices, taking refuge at the piano; and it will not be deemed surprising that Paul was attracted to turn over the leaves of her music.

Paul Veryan, after a few days at Caprice, decided within himself that the place was perfect, and that its young mistress was also perfect. Lord Latimer had an admirable system, only practicable when accompanied by the peculiar faculty which

he possessed. He did nothing himself. He knew how to choose the right man to do it. His major-domo and butler and cook were immaculate; so were his secretary and librarian. Veryan found that not only were all possible wants supplied at Caprice, but that they were forestalled. It was the very magic of management. The morning papers were always ready to hand; the last new pamphlet or poem tempted you with its leaves cut open; if you wanted a cigar or an effervescent mixture, it seemed to be wooing your acceptance. It was the utter perfection of luxurious life.

And this was attained through the Earl's rare faculty of knowing how always to find the right man for the right place.

As for Lady Lucy, Paul soon saw that she was a consummate coquette. Now to look on, an indifferent though amused spec-

tator, at the airy ways of a coquette, is like watching the fantastic doings of some wild creature—a squirrel, for example. But don't try to catch your squirrel. He bites—and bites hard. Nearly four centuries ago an English poet addressed an English maiden thus:—

“Merry Margaret
As Midsummer flower,
Gentle as falcon,
Or hawk of the tower.”

Was there quiet irony in the Rev. John Skelton's lyrical address to Mistress Margaret Hussey? The falcon may be gentle enough with hooded eyes upon a wrist well gauntleted; but see the merciless bird swooping down swifter than any arrow upon its quarry! I strongly suspect that Mistress Margaret was an arrant coquette, and that the reverend poet had excellent reasons for knowing it.

Certainly, Lady Lucy read Paul Ver-

yan a lesson in the gay and gentle science of love. She fixed her claws in him, the delicious dangerous creature. A very few days in her company sufficed to enslave him. And then, of course, he began seriously to reflect on the extreme folly of being thus enslaved. Here was he, a failure in life thus far—a man who had seen more lustrums than he cared to count, without making any visible career for himself, or mark upon society—here was he, falling in love with the dainty darling of an English Earl—a creature unique in her loveliness and vivacity—a morsel, if not for a monarch, at least for a young Duke. He laughed himself to scorn for his folly, and then drove down with Lady Lucy to the pier, and accompanied her on board the *Iberia*, and allowed his folly to get fuller possession of him than ever.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELECTION.

“It is an easy thing in the sight of the Lord on a sudden to make a poor man rich.”—*Ecclesiasticus*.

THE colours are gradually fading from our contested elections—indeed, the very last number of that excellent periodical, *Notes and Queries*, contained a grave discussion as to what *are* the colours which candidates of different parties should use. As if everybody did not know the Tory true blue, the Whig orange, the Radical red.

Of course the change is all in the interest of civilization. No good is done by broken heads or battered hats. Unlimited

beer has its disadvantages. The administration and reception of bribes are not precisely moral. By-and-by, as the far-sighted Disraeli perceived, we shall come to voting-papers; and when we do, the most fiercely-contested general election will not interfere with business half so much as a heavy shower of rain. But Benjamin Disraeli is before his time.

However, there was great fun at Oceanborough. The ladies canvassed, and that with no ordinary zeal. The Tory party started an illustrated newspaper, whereto Paul Vervan contributed, with pen and pencil, several happy audacities. One brilliant attack upon Professor Goskett was set to a popular melody, and about a hundred loud-voiced minstrels were brought from London to yell it through the streets. Mr. Goskett's philosophy must have been sorely tried. He preach-

ed the Radical millennium at great length to many meetings; he brought philosophers of his own set to endorse his views; he abused his opponent with a virulence in which the modern philosophical Radical is only rivalled by the cabman in his supreme moment of inebriety. Alas for the Professor! If he came on the Parade, he could see Thorold's blue ribbons in every fashionable bonnet of the thousands thronging that unique thoroughfare in carriages, on horseback, and on foot.

Unparalleled ingratitude of womankind! Professor Goskett's pet crotchet was the introduction of female suffrage.

Meanwhile, our hero greatly enjoyed the affair. He entered into it life and soul. He wrote pasquinades, drew caricatures, canvassed impracticable voters, obeyed the electioneering orders of the

ladies—and of one lady in particular. Every day there was a political dinner, and after the dinner a meeting, seldom unaccompanied by a row; and after the meeting a quiet sederunt, at which, by the aid of cigars and icy liquids, political mischief was hatched. The air was as stimulant as Champagne. Nobody had time to think, and Paul, whose reflexions would have been of a sombre and bitter character, was heartily glad of it.

At last came the day of nomination. Those who know Oceanborough—or rather who think they know it—remember only its superb esplanade of mansions and hotels and shops. Take a mile of Grosvenor Mansions—intersperse them with half a dozen Charing Cross Hotels—put at the end of these one side of Bond Street—finish with another mile or so of the mansions and hotels—and you get the

kind of frontage which Oceanborough presents to the sea. But at the back of this there is a big squalid dreary town; and in the front of its dingy town-hall, which you may go to Oceanborough a hundred times without seeing, the hustings were erected. Mr. Thorold had managed to obtain some rooms opposite for the ladies: and here Paul, with Lord Latimer and two or three other gentlemen, found himself at about eleven o'clock in the morning. Oceanborough's municipal rulers did not permit ladies on the hustings, as is the case in towns where the mayor and the council are civilized.

Now, I am not going to give you an abstract of the speeches. Nobody heard them except the reporters. The Radicals had packed the square in front of the town-hall: the men of the other side,

who thus found themselves excluded, of course did their utmost to reach the centre. So there was perpetual uproar—a maelstrom of men; and all that proposers and seconders and candidates could do was to speak to the reporters.

There was a balcony in front of these rooms which I have mentioned, and of course it was crowded with ladies, full of enthusiasm. When Mr. Thorold was in the middle of his speech, Lady Lucy turned suddenly round and exclaimed,

“How thirsty he must be! I wish he had some Champagne.”

Paul, like a *preux chevalier*, took a bottle from the table, ran downstairs, and was soon elbowing his way through the crowd. No joke, let me tell you, elbowing one's way through a thick election throng, every member of which is trying hard to get into a place where he is

not. But Paul, not being of fragile material, succeeded in his enterprise—made his way to the front of the hustings in triumph, filled Mr. Thorold a tumbler of Champagne, and was amply rewarded on his return by a joyous smile from Lady Lucy's eyes.

The show of hands was unquestionably in favour of Mr. Thorold; but the mayor, being a Radical, naturally gave it the other way. A poll having been demanded, the assembly gradually dispersed, not without a few small fights. The Conservative candidate came across to the ladies.

"You made a capital speech, Thorold," said the Earl—"so far as I could judge by your gesticulations. Now, look here, your cares are over. Leave everything to-night to your committee. Come and dine with me at eight, and we'll have some music and billiards."

That evening was pleasant and memorable to our hero. Of course there was a perfect dinner, and lots of easy graceful talk; and it was nice to see how the old Earl managed to keep up Mr. Thorold's spirits at this nervous moment. Then, as was intimated, came music; and Lady Lucy sang a gay ballad, whereof the first stanza ran:

"I heard a joyous carol
Beside a castle old,
From one in white apparel
With loose long locks of gold.
She sang: 'Mid forests shady
Thy knightly toils begin:
Faint heart ne'er won fair lady,
Or aught that heart should win.'"

The rest of the romance was just as much like a poem by "a person of quality" as this specimen; but it was gay and cheery, with a stirring melody. And then came a game or two of pool, wherein Lady Lucy showed herself an adept in taking lives.

When the guests had departed, and Veryan was about to go to his room, Lord Latimer asked him to give him a few minutes in the library. There was a very choice library at Caprice—not a vast collection of volumes, but just exactly the books of necessity and the books of luxury which everybody is sure to want. Mill and Tupper were conspicuously absent; but you would find Mansel and Browning.”

“Mr. Veryan,” said the Earl, without any circumlocution, “I have an offer to make you. Pardon me for saying that I see you want a career. Now, although I am not in the Cabinet, which is, indeed, because I would much rather not, they occasionally consult me on matters of one sort and another. For example, just now they want a Secretary for the

Thaumaturgical Commission. You know all about that, I suppose?"

"I'm sorry to say I don't," said Paul.

"No more do I; and it doesn't matter. But there are three Commissioners; so Savile writes me—one a rather eccentric Bishop, another a Duke who has gout six months a year, and the third an exasperating Radical Viscount. They want a Secretary to drive this unicorn team; and they'll be all the better pleased if he can do a few other trifling political matters for them. Would this sort of thing suit you?"

Of course Paul expressed his doubts as to whether he was fit for the work; but the Earl cut him very short.

"I have seen enough of you to know that you can do it if you try. A Secretary's duty is to manage his committee. Beyond that, there are little matters of

political literature and political management—things requiring a ready pen and an adroit intellect—which you'll learn all about in due time. The salary's two thousand a year, with a house and coals and candles, I think. I'm not sure about the coals and candles, but I'll swear to the two thousand. Will you take it?"

The answer is easily guessed; but Lord Latimer would hear of no gratitude.

"No thanks," he said. "You're the man for the work, or I shouldn't have made the offer. As soon as this election is over, we'll induct you. Good night."

"Well," thought Paul Veryan to himself, as he sat before his dressing-room fire that night, and smoked a contemplative cigar, "now there is a commencement for me. It is an odd and rather astonishing business—Secretary to the Thau-

maturgical Commission ! What next ? ”

Let it not be supposed that Paul was taking a Bohemian's liberty when he smoked in his dressing-room. Quite the reverse. He had found a box of excellent cigars there on the night of his arrival ; and not cigars only, but a stand of decanters filled with various fluids, and an ample supply of soda and seltzer. Lord Latimer liked his guests to enjoy themselves in their own independent way, and provided the requisite materials.

But let us suffer Paul to proceed with his soliloquy. It was a pleasant, yet perplexing surprise to him, this event. He could hardly realize his good fortune. And, though endowed with as much audacity as will enable a young fellow—or a middle-aged fellow—to make love to a lady, or ride across country, or edit a newspaper, or fight a duel, he

really felt diffident as to his capacity for managing three Commissioners—a Duke, a Viscount, and a Bishop. It is hard to rise above the adventitious differences of men. Such is the flunkeyism of the human animal, that the majority of men would feel more awed in the presence of the Prince of Wales or the Duke of Bedford than in that of Carlyle or Matthew Arnold. I don't blame them. It is the unhappy result of a factitious education.

When Bayle was publishing his *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres* he spoke of Queen Christina of Sweden simply as "Christina." That famous daughter of the victor of Lutzen, who had Oxenstiern to teach her with how little wisdom the world is governed, was weak enough to be slightly offended. But the philosopher coolly replied that there were persons

above titles: that one doesn't talk of King Alexander of Macedon; that, in fact, her Majesty ought to have felt rather flattered than otherwise. Of course the Queen was appeased. And there is a well-known story of a Gascon officer, who said to his comrades, "I am going to dine with Villars." The Marshal overheard him, and said, "By reason of my rank, it would perhaps be better to say Monsieur de Villars." "Sir," replied the Gascon, "we don't say Monsieur de Cæsar."

By the way, the Romans had a good deal more common sense than we have in this matter of titles. A man's name was enough. See how Horace writes of Mæcenas, who was a tremendously heavy swell in his time. However, these are things that right themselves; and there is a time when even among us English, with all our infinite gradations of rank, the man gets above his

title. Who ever cared to remember that Palmerston was an Irish Viscount ?

Paul, like the majority of us, immersed in the subtle fluid which emanates from an aristocracy, was rather appalled at the notion of having to manage a Duke, a Viscount, and a Bishop. He had not seen much of people of these classes. He was unaware that Bishops are too often chosen for their purely negative qualities—for their weakness and mildness and general easy nonentity. Stephen Langton would hardly suit us as Archbishop of Canterbury in this nineteenth century. Nor was Vervan capable at first of realizing the fact that a Duke is very much like any other human being. So of course he magnified the task which he had before him.

There were letters on his table, and among the rest one from Harington, pressing him to come to town, as the first

number of the *Rapier* would be out in a week. I regret to say that he threw it aside contemptuously. What was a new speculation in journalism to the Secretary to the Thaumaturgical Commission?

CHAPTER XII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

“ Poor little fool !
Send her to school—

Make her learn grammar, and sit on a stool !”

Old Song.

OCEANBOROUGH has rejected its Radical pedant—the Dr. Pangloss of politics. Lord Latimer and his charming little daughter are somewhere abroad. Paul Veryan is in London. So I have leisure to follow the fortunes of the naughty runaway from Windermere.

People who possess rank or wealth, or both, while their intellectual capacities are low, think an immense deal more of the said possessions than they are really worth.

Of course they are anything but worthless. In days like these, for example, an English peer who is mentally equal to his fellow-men has magnificent opportunities. He has a social position which gives him enormous advantages. He can utter his opinion on the great questions of the day, with a certainty that what he says among his peers will be reported to the world, and read (if worth reading) by myriads of men. These facts remembered, it is often a wonder to me that so few members of the peerage make any mark on the minds of their countrymen. There are between four and five hundred of them, if I recollect aright—who can enumerate and individualize from memory one tenth of their number? Here is a pleasant evening's amusement for an idle party; name forty living peers of this realm who have done anything good or bad sufficient to differen-

tiate them from the ordinary herd of men.
What saith Pope?—

“Go! if your ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept through scoundrels ever since the flood.
Go! and pretend your family is young;
Nor own your fathers have been fools so long.
What can ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards.”

I am not a Democrat—quite the reverse: I am, if anything, a Tory. But I don't think the English titled aristocracy does itself justice. Observe, I use the word “titled” with a purpose: the gentlemen of England, taken as a whole, do their duty nobly. But the peers of England seem scarcely to realize the vast power which their position confers on them.

Nor do the possessors of great wealth, as a rule, understand its relative value. They both overestimate and underestimate it. They are prone to think it a

better thing than genius or health or personal beauty: it is nothing of the kind. At the same time, they are apt to neglect the real power which it bestows—the power of beautifying the world for themselves, and of improving it for others. The majority of millionaires are stingy. They are so terribly afraid of being cheated, that they deny themselves the luxury of generosity. These are days in which great fortunes are frequently amassed by men rising from the very lowest ranks of life: whoever has had much experience of the world, will be acquainted with such cases. Though I have only just ended my eighth lustrum, I can point to an opulent member of Parliament, whose father, I remember in my boyhood as a day-labourer. Now, it is noticeable that the men who do thus acquire fortunes seldom know the

right way to expend their incomes. They find the possession of wealth gives them such adventitious importance, that they are loth to use it freely, and are always anxious to add to it. The millionaire himself married for love, perhaps; married when he was earning a frugal livelihood by the sweat of his brow, or the toil of his brain; and likely enough, that marriage was the very best thing he could have done to attain success, bringing him at once a helpmeet and a stimulus. But the millionaire's son and heir must marry for position and money; must get a little higher in the social scale, and add gold to gold. It does not occur to the possessor of ample wealth that the best use he can make of it is to confer happiness on his family. He regards wealth as a thing valuable in itself, whereas its sole value lies in its results.

“To whom can riches give repute or trust,
Content or pleasure, but the good and just?”

This desultory dissertation has been prompted by the reflexion that old Colonel Brabazon had quite enough money to make his daughter Agnes happy in marrying anyone fortunate enough to win her love; but that (being under petticoat government) he was trying to force her into the arms of “Linen” Lanyon, a desperately opulent draper, whose innate vulgarity was not to be washed out either by Eton, or Christchurch, or society, or by all the water that fell upon the earth ere the Ark was stranded on Ararat.

Colonel Brabazon knew perfectly well that, if Agnes were forced to marry Lanyon, she could never be thoroughly happy, and that he himself should always detest and despise his son-in-law. But

when a man is afraid of his wife what is he to do?

It was almost a relief to the old gentleman when his daughter was found to have disappeared; it was quite a relief when the telegram arrived from Miss Elmore, and she knew that he was in a place of safety, out of Lanyon's reach for the present. The Colonel was not an imaginative man, nor, I think, particularly tender-hearted; but they say there were tears in his eyes when he went into his little girl's room that morning, and saw her bed untouched, and her dainty birthday gifts lying neglected on her dressing-table. He swore a good deal under his moustache. As for his wife, she first fainted—and then revived and scolded her husband—and then fainted again—continuing the alternate processes for a considerable period.

Picture to yourself a spacious reception room at the Azure Academy. It contains seven persons. Agnes Brabazon is there, shrinking into a corner of a sofa, with a handkerchief pressed to her eyes. By her side sits Aurora Elmore, her protectress, holding one of her trembling little hands. Miss Bettesworth is at a writing-table, as if prepared to take notes of the conference. Colonel and Mrs. Brabazon are seated uneasily on two of the stiffest chairs in the room, looking very much as if they were the prisoners at the bar. Lord Carysfort, tall, slender, insouciant, stands with his back to the fire, and his pale blue eyes looking vacantly on vacancy. But the most imposing figure in the room reclines in a particularly easy chair by the fire. This is a vivacious old lady, with a half humorous, half sarcastic look; her eyes bright as they had ever been, her

complexion of that pure pallor which is seen where extreme age co-exists with perfect health, her dress a miraculous mixture of superb silk and priceless point lace. It is Miss Anastasia Brabazon.

"We are in a curious position," said that old lady, "or, at least, I am. No body seems to know precisely what is wanted. My little niece runs away from home—I don't quite know why; and then does me the honour of taking refuge with me. Consequently I think I am bound to help her out of her difficulty, if it is to be done."

"It is a very serious matter, Miss Brabazon," said the runaway's mamma, who did not at all admire the easy way in which Aunt Anastasia seemed disposed to treat the transgressor and her transgression. "When I was a young lady such a thing as

running away from home would have been considered ruinous for life."

Little Agnes shuddered. Miss Elmore pressed her hand consolingly.

"Well," rejoined Miss Anastasia, "fashions change, in everything. When *I* was a young lady, which is a long time ago, running away was rather the *mode*. Indeed I ran away myself once. I intended to have got married, but, luckily for me, papa overtook me an hour too soon. Now your little girl, Ralph, has, if I am rightly informed, run away from a husband, which is not nearly so wicked."

"From a young gentleman who would have made her an excellent husband; one of the wealthiest men we have," said Mrs. Brabazon.

"Dear me!" said Aunt Anastasia, putting her lace handkerchief to her eyes, and then examining Agnes through a

heavy double eyeglass, "how thoughtless these young things are, now-a-day! To think of running away from a charming young gentleman with a great estate! It sounds quite irreligious! But I have not heard his name yet. Who is he, Ralph?"

"Mr. Lanyon," said Colonel Brabazon.

"Lanyon! Lanyon! I don't remember the name. Do you know him, my lord?"

"Upon my word," drawled Lord Carysfort, "I have no distinct recollection of any such person. There is Charley Lanyon, Lord Brancepeth's nephew; but he ran away two years ago, with old Sidonia's daughter—a little Jewess, with a million a month in her own right."

"Mr. Lanyon's father realized his immense fortune in mercantile pursuits, my lord," said Mrs. Brabazon, in a dignified tone.

"Why, hang it!" exclaimed the Earl,

"it's *not* little Lanyon the draper—Lanyon and Jones—the cad who has been blackballed at every respectable club in London? Why, that's the man who offered Horace Fane a monkey to get him the *entrée* to Lady Vivian Luttrell's Wednesdays. It can't be that Lanyon?"

"The same, no doubt," said the Colonel, rather pleased at his wife's discomfiture.

There was an ominous pause. At length Miss Anastasia spoke.

"Well, Ralph," she said, "if you wish to marry your daughter to a tailor, I suppose you can. I am not at all surprised at her running away. If you insist upon doing it, I shall go and live abroad. Why, I buy all sorts of things at Lanyon's, and I might see the odious monster behind the counter any day. Perhaps he'd make Agnes serve in the shop."

"Lanyon is said to be enormously rich," interposed Lord Carysfort.

"He keeps a shop, for all that," said the uncompromising old lady. "And I'm no great believer in wealth, unless it's in the shape of land. However, all this is nothing to me. What are you going to do with this child, Ralph? Take her back and marry her to this draper?"

Colonel Brabazon and his wife exchanged significant glances. It was the lady who answered.

"Of course it is too late to think of anything of the kind. We have no wish to make Agnes marry against her will. Young girls' prejudices are generally rather foolish; and I have no doubt Agnes would have recognised Mr. Lanyon's good qualities in time; but as there seems so strong a feeling against him because his father was in trade, I suppose it is

vain for me to say anything in his favour."

"I say nothing against him," observed Lord Carysfort, "except that he's an awful fool—and the worst of it is, a vulgar fool. I give him five years to ruin himself."

Again there was a pause.

"Agnes Brabazon," said Aunt Anastasia, after awhile, "is a very nice little girl; and, if properly formed, might marry into any family. I haven't much money, you know, Ralph; but what I have will go to Agnes and her children, if she marries well. But if you marry her to that linendraper, I'll leave every farthing I possess to the Asylum for Incurable Idiots."

Now, Miss Anastasia Brabazon was well known to possess at least twenty thousand a year.

"You know," said Colonel Brabazon, "that your opinion would influence me, without any question of money. And of course if this Mr. Lanyon is not in society—there is an end of the whole affair."

The Colonel was on the point of adding that he regarded Lanyon as a very vulgar creature, but stopped just in time. Miss Anastasia would have wanted to know why he consented to Lanyon's addressing his daughter; and he must have confessed to petticoat government.

"If we have done with this Lanyon," said Miss Bragazon, "I have a suggestion to make. You cannot take Agnes back to Windermere: Lanyon is there. I cannot receive her: I am always on the wing, and have half a dozen people to visit during the next two months. Let the little runaway remain here, if Miss Bettesworth will be kind enough to receive

her, and is not afraid of her contaminating the rest of the pupils. Agnes has been too idle. She is unformed, undisciplined; a year or two at school will do her a world of good."

"I should miss her very much," growled the Colonel.

"No doubt you would," said the old lady, "but that cannot be helped. You must think of the child's own interests. Why, they kept me at school till I was three-and-twenty, and I have never regretted it. The question is, will Miss Bettsworth receive her?"

The Azure Academy, as we know, was full of pupils; but the Lady Principal had taken a fancy to Agnes, and agreed with Miss Anastasia that a little scholastic discipline would do the runaway good. So she expressed her willingness to receive her.

And Colonel and Mrs. Brabazon, having nothing better to propose, and desiring to please their wealthy relation, gave their assent. And so it chanced that Miss Agnes Brabazon, who in a month or two might if she would have been Mrs. Lanyon, found herself dressed in the crimson livery of the second division, an insignificant unit among some hundred school-girls. Indeed examination proved her to be such a little dunce, that she narrowly escaped being placed in the lower school.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGNES AT SCHOOL.

“Lady, very fair are you,
And your eyes are very blue;
And your nose;
And your brow is like the snow,
And the various things you know,
Goodness knows!”

The Owl.

THIS is a chapter which I wanted my wife to write for me. She declined. I hate ladies' schools—specially when they are called seminaries—intensely when they are called ladies' colleges. Such establishments are at the root of modern Beckerism.

My notion of a girl's education is, that it should be a home education. The

main function of a woman is to make a home. This, in the eyes of Mill and Miss Martineau, disciples of "Pop" Malthus, is a very low view of the question; but, after careful study of the highest authorities, inspired and uninspired, Psalmist and Dramatist, I have come to the conclusion that it is the highest view. Solomon and Shakespeare agree with me.

In that pleasant seaside town of Oceanborough, if you go out after an early breakfast, to smoke a cigar and inhale sea air, you meet no end of feminine scholastic processions. It is quite a treat to see their pretty faces. Yet it makes me melancholy. There is a double mistake in it. Every school-girl in those numerous ranks represents, *first*, a home which is not truly a home; *next*, an education based upon a mistake, and neces-

sarily incomplete. The school system—especially the Eton or Rugby system—suits boys well. It is a foretaste of the world they will have to encounter. The ladies'-school system is wholly a blunder. Girls were meant to be, first daughters, and then wives. Pupils of the neoteric "Ladies' College" naturally forget the one, and are not at all prepared for the other.

The Azure Academy was an exceptional establishment. For, while Miss Priscilla Bettsworth—herself a feminine Crichton—taught, or caused to be taught, to those susceptible of such instruction, the highest subtleties of art and mysteries of science, yet her theory was in all cases to *educate*—to lead out, or, as we say in these days, to develop the mind of each pupil. So, while there was a laboratory on the premises, and an observatory, there were

likewise a kitchen and a still-room ; and it was frequently found that students who could by no means be taught to comprehend lunar mutation or the aberration of light, had a light hand at pastry, and could make a *Bavaroise aux abricots* to perfection—and that those who in the laboratory failed to understand the separation of potassium from oxygen, or the extraction of iodine from wraic, were most skilful in distilling from flower and fruit and herb essences not less exquisite than the monastic chartreuse and trappisti, or than the strong waters only obtainable at one quaint old house in Amsterdam. One may make a Nesselrode pudding without knowing much about Nesselrode.

Chymistry is a great science. Dr. Young tells us that

“The undevout astronomer is mad:”

and, assuredly, he who can watch the

great procession of the stars, and behold the edicts of the Supreme Will written in luminous letters on the midnight sky, without a very clear perception of the creating and sustaining Presence, must be a calculating machine, and nothing more. Yet it often seems to me that there is even a clearer apocalypse for the lonely chymist in his laboratory. Daily he works miracles; and when, under his hand, flame is kindled on an ice-block, or ice generated in a crucible filled with fire, or any of the myriads of inevitable transmutations is performed, surely he must be aware of the mediate working of a strong and sleepless Power. Too often, perhaps, he ignores the living force which is hidden behind the phenomena; too often forgets that he is a mere instrument, and that the results produced by his means are the very work of God.

But I am writing seriously—which is a mistake. I was about to say that, while chymistry is a great science, cookery is by no means its least important branch. Little Agnes Brabazon was a terrible dunce in many matters, but she had a talent, which was soon discovered; she was a perfect artist in confectionery. In that line she possessed inventive genius, and quite amazed the slow coaches of the kitchen by her brilliant and original combinations. Herein was some slight consolation for her comparative failure in the school-room. Agnes Brabazon's *bête noire* was arithmetic. Now, as I have said, the pupils of the High School did most of the teaching in the lower departments; and there was a little girl from Guernsey, by name Eva Le Lacheur, with a mathematical genius as distinct as that of Adams, who at the age of fourteen had found her

way into the High School, and wore its patrician blue livery, by sheer mastery of calculation. She was a table of logarithms and squares and cubes and reciprocals and recondite functions in petticoats. Now, she was the chief teacher of arithmetic and algebra in the Middle School, and she was a cantankerous little party, with a constitutional predisposition to tyranny; and when our Agnes, a young person four years older than herself, and a dreadful dunce in arithmetic, became her pupil, Miss Le Lacheur was delighted, and treated her with great severity. The cruel way in which, at the bidding of this precocious child, poor Agnes was "kept in" until she had finished impracticable incomprehensible sums, was really abominable. This was the sort of question Miss Le Lacheur took fiendish delight in asking:

"A can do a piece of work in twenty-seven days, and B in fifteen days. A works at it alone for twelve days, B then works five days, and afterwards C finishes it in four days; in what time could C have done the whole work without assistance?"

Confound A, B, and C, I say! I quite agree with the puzzled poet who, just three hundred years ago [*vide* De Morgan, *Arithmetical Books*, i. 31] wrote thus:—

"Multiplication is mie vexation,
And Division is quite as bad,
The Golden Rule is mie stumbling stule,
And Practice drives me mad."

Agnes Brabazon was of the same opinion.

However, she had her consolations. Not the least was her intimate association with Aurora Elmore. That young lady took the greatest possible care of her, and they became complete cronies. And, as Miss Elmore had much knowledge of the

world and of books, doubtless the intimacy was serviceable to little Agnes.

By-and-by there arrived a short vacation ; and, as it appeared inadvisable for Agnes Brabazon to go to Windermere, where the famous Lanyon was still prominent, she accepted Miss Elmore's invitation to pass a short time at the house of her uncle, an opulent attorney, resident somewhere in the classic vicinage of Islington.

Miss Elmore's uncle was her *bête noire*. He was a short stout yellowish-bearded man of forty, with the uneuphonious name of Hognire. He was a generous sort of fellow, with what may be styled selfish generosity ; that is to say, he did not care how much he spent if he thereby obtained any personal gratification. He would lend money to a man in a gentlemanly position, in order to secure his acquaintanceship.

But, if anything put him out of temper, he was the most pig-headed personage that the whole legal profession contains.

Now, the said Hogmire was Miss Elmore's uncle by marriage; and, as his wife chanced to be a good many years older than himself, he was particularly fond of a quiet flirtation with his niece. That young lady could do just what she liked with him; and being an independent original sort of girl, she took advantage of her influence; and, moreover, it gave her intense delight to worry her grave uncle by flirtation with younger gentlemen than he. Be good enough not to find fault with Aurora, who is a great favourite of mine, because she was an accomplished artist in flirtation. I agree with the poet who thus describes the lady he admires—

“Of course she's a dab at flirtation;
I'd not give a handle of dirt,

Or a copy of Bright's last oration,
For a girl who's not able to flirt."

And I can assure you it was as good as a comedy to see this dignified yet humorous young lady flirting with some pleasant fellow, while the irate Hogmire glared at them with small porcine eyes, under bushy yellow eyebrows.

Well, the attorney invited his niece to spend this brief vacation at his house; and she intimated her intention of not only coming herself, but also of bringing a friend.

Hogmire was delighted. The notion of taking about a couple of charming young ladies was just what he liked. He sent his confidential clerk (who was also a little bit of a detective) to secure operaboxes and the like, and looked forward to a pleasant series of little suppers after the theatre.

Hogmire, be it observed, though an attorney—and rather a successful attorney—was romantic and sentimental. I use these adjectives “advisedly,” as they say in the House of Commons. There was something Byronic about him. He thought the destinies were hard upon him; not considering that character is destiny. Doubtless he had at the time excellent reasons for marrying a lady old enough to be his mamma; but now he was wont to bemoan the cruel fate which denied to him—a gushing and passionate young fellow of forty—the full gratification of his fervent feelings. His sole consolation was his Platonic liaison with his niece; and that young lady, having no rooted objection to opera-boxes and silk dresses and Jouvin’s gloves, laughingly tolerated this queer avuncular romance.

Now it so chanced, when Hogmire sent

his confidential clerk in search of operaboxes, that the said clerk was able to offer his master a private box on a famous first night. That divine contralto, Diana Dezii, was going to sing for the first time in London. The *Rapier* had just been started. Tom Harington was in the early flush of triumphant editorship, and meeting this confidential clerk, who dabbled a little in literature at the Gorilla Club, he gave him a box in that princely way for which he is renowned. The clerk transferred this to his employer, who was never reluctant to economize: and thus it occurred that on the night in question the lawyer and our two young friends were among the first to hear Diana Dezii.

Tom Harington was there himself, the occupant of a stall. He never missed the first appearance of a cantatrice or an

actress. He was not alone. Paul Veryan had just returned to town, having to report himself as Secretary to the Thaumaturgical Commission, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Westminster Abbey. He was easily persuaded to accompany his friend to hear the Dezii.

"Well, she can sing," said Harington, at the end of the first act.

"And she can act, too," said Veryan.
 "And isn't she confoundedly pretty?"

"It seems to me that there are two prettier girls in my box," said Harington, who had been examining Aurora and Agnes through his opera-glass.

"Who are they?"

"Hanged if I know! I gave the box to a little fellow with whom I've a very slight acquaintance. He does legal notes for us occasionally. But he is not with them. Odd-looking old boy they've got

there. I seem to recollect his face. Egad, I do too! He's a lawyer. I was served with a writ once, and had to ferret him out in some old-fashioned chambers, and make an arrangement. He was awfully civil—thought it so great a pity a gentleman of my intellectual acquirements should be in any pecuniary difficulty."

"He didn't lend you the money, I suppose?"

"No, but he gave me ample time. I shall go up and talk to him. Will you come?"

"No, I'm not quite audacious enough. You'll find me in the saloon."

Tom Harington's forte was getting on with ladies. There was an imperial way about him, which caused some of his friends to call him the Emperor; and just at present, being the chief of an

original and brilliant journal, he was of course more superb than usual. He quite astonished old Hogmire, and fascinated the two girls: and the consequence was that the lawyer asked him to sup with them at the Pall Mall.

He replied that he had a friend with him.

"Bring your friend," said Hogmire, with effusion.

But Paul declined.

"No," he said. "I like the look of the girls uncommonly, but I don't admire your male friend. Go, my boy, and sup, and be happy. I'll walk straight home, with perhaps the refreshment of a dozen oysters—and go misanthropically to bed, and smoke, and read *Dunias fils*."

So Harington had the affair to himself, and enjoyed it. He effaced and obliterated the uncle. He was surpassingly

brilliant; the sparkle of the Heidseck, the effervescence of the Clicquot, were as nothing to his rare intellectual display. I'll say this for Tom Harington: when he is in the vein, few people possess anything at all like his brilliant ease, his inexhaustible fluency.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RAPIER.

*"Pugio, quam curvis signat brevis orbita venis,
Stridentem gelidis hunc Salo tinxit aquis."*

"**S**ALO," as I am informed by the omniscient Dr. William Smith, was "a tributary of the Iberus, in Celtiberia, which flowed by Bilbilis, the birthplace of Martial, who accordingly frequently mentions it in his poems." I like that "accordingly"; it is quite in the classic style of Mr. Charles J. Yellowplush.

However, it is quite true that Martial loved the rivulet; and in his charming verses to Licianus, he recommended its

waters to him, as healthfully bracing after warmer baths.

“ Quibus remissum corpus adstringas brevi
Salone, qui ferrum gelat.”

Beside its waters he hardened to keenness his rapier-pointed epigram.

Tom Harington called his paper the *Rapier* (though its point was not dipped in Salo) because he thought it a fine gentlemanly name, and because he thought he had a genius for epigram. He hadn't. Tom was nothing if not fluent. He could talk like a brace of Gladstones, or write you a couple of columns about nothing as fast as Sala himself; but he certainly was not epigrammatic. However, there was excellent stuff in the *Rapier* as journals go; and its proprietary were not losing much money by it.

Ah, the respected Mr. Eastbury, its chief proprietor, must be described. Roscoe,

heretofore mentioned, though he had capital in the enterprise, was second to the indefatigable Eastbury. He was a little plain-shaven man, and looked like an owl in spectacles. He was the most restless and fussy of mortals. He had come up from Idlechester, where he was the owner of the principal newspaper, for the purpose of starting a journal in the Ministerial interest. His object, be it observed, was not so much to make his journal pay, as to serve the Government in such a way that they should reward him with a sinecure. Paul's secretaryship would have suited him exactly. Indeed, I am not sure that he had not applied for it. He applied for everything,

Eastbury was in luck in one respect. He knew a member of the Government. Sir Clifford Pynes had a place near Idlechester, and tolerated and even patronized

the ambitious newspaper-owner. Sir Clifford was a first-rate second-rate man. The Ministry included two first-rate men—one of whom (the First Minister) was a man of real political genius. Now, it has always been found that men of really first-class talent are apt to grow mutinous when they have to serve under a man of genius. Talent dreads genius as the cat dreads the dog. Consequently the First Minister in question, having an almost Shakesperian knowledge of men, surrounded himself so far as possible with men of talent of the second order—men too far beneath his own lofty flight for jealousy to be possible. Of these the excellent Sir Clifford was one.

So Eastbury oscillated between his office in the Strand and that particular part of Downing Street where Sir Clifford Pynes was to be found. I fear he terribly

bored that good Secretary, and that good Secretary's excellent private secretary. Indeed, the latter, who was wittier than his superior, nicknamed Eastbury the Old Man of the Sea, a sobriquet which passed from Downing Street to the Strand, and was heard from the irreverent lips of printers' devils. It was an awful truth that Eastbury fastened upon his victims as did that weird old man upon Sinbad the Sailor. Sir Clifford, not having quite strength enough of mind to resist him, saw him at least once a day all through the Session of Parliament. Sir Clifford's private secretary saw him a good deal oftener. As to poor Tom Harington, he worried him confoundedly. Tom, you know, liked an easy dinner, with a crony or two, at a Fleet Street tavern—a steak and some stout, and a little “rack” or punch to follow—with plenty of humorous

converse. But Eastbury would have Tom dine with him about three days a week. And the said Eastbury being a provincial, and having as yet no *pied à terre* in town, stopped at a second-rate hotel, where the cooking was execrable, and where, if there was any good wine, at any rate I fear Harington never got any of it. Again, he had an abominable habit of giving dinner parties, to which he invited all the able men of the London press with whom he could scrape the slightest acquaintance. Giving them a vile dinner and worse wine, he expected to hear in return much brilliant converse. Of course, men came *once*—they did not come again. But our friend Tom Harington, who found attendance at these dinners a part of his editorial duty, began to think that he had sold himself into slavery for twelve hundred a year.

The day after the Signora Diana Dezii's first night, Harington and Veryan walked together to the *Rapier* office. At that illustrious establishment, Paul smoked a cigar in his friend's room, and amused himself by writing a squib against the Leader of the Opposition, who happened at the time to be talking two or three columns a night of the stuff they style progressive politics. By-and-by, after Harington had opened innumerable letters, and received the requisite visits from many officials, and sketched out the day's business, in came the Old Man of the Sea. Veryan was introduced to him, and of course there came an invitation to dinner.

"We shall be a quiet party to-day, Harington," he said. "Roscoe may come in, but it's doubtful. Come, and bring your friend. You shall have some capital wine, I promise you."

"I'll tell you what, Paul," said Harington, when the fussy little fellow was gone, "if Roscoe comes, I'll eat him. He's got some wine at Richmond: I never tasted better when I used to dine with Rothschild—Sir Anthony, I mean, you know; the other fellow don't understand wine. Why, when I was in Italy, Victor Emmanuel used to say to his major domo, 'We must have good wine to-day, Castiglione; Colonel Harington knows good wine from bad.' And the Pope always gave me his choicest *Lachrymæ Christi*. And now to think I must be poisoned with the wretched stuff East-bury calls wine."

"What service were you colonel in, Tom?" asked Paul Veryan. "Never mind the Pope and King Victor, old boy. Get hold of the Old Man of the Sea before dinner, and tell him I've just been stay-

ing at Berlin with the King of Prussia and old Bismark, and have learnt to distinguish Clicquot from gooseberry."

However, the dinner was inevitable; and, meanwhile, the business of the journal being over, Harington and Vryan strolled into Regent Street. It was just the hour when both the moral and the immoral sides of that thoroughfare are crowded, while innumerable carriages make the pedestrian's passage from one to the other an affair of perplexity and peril.

"Do you know," said Vryan, "I thought those were two niceish girls you got hold of last night. Who were they? I fancy I have seen one of them before, somewhere or other."

"I couldn't quite make them out," said Harington. "One of them's an heiress, but I didn't quite understand which. And the old buffer who takes care of them

was an uncle to either one or both. And the big one was rather too clever for me, and the little one rather too silly. But I should like to know which was the heiress."

"No doubt you would, you unscrupulous adventurer. Take my advice, and stick to the silly one—she's sure to be the heiress. But it was the other whose face I seem to remember."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harington, "there they are—just coming out of Houbigant's. Shall I introduce you?"

"No objection in the world, my dear boy."

So the introduction was effected—the redoubtable uncle being, of course, absent; and little Agnes Brabazon thought, not unnaturally, that she could have liked either of these gentlemen much better than Lanyon the linendraper, and felt un-

certain which of the two she preferred.

But the moment Paul Veryan looked into the eyes of Aurora Elmore, his vague remembrance changed to complete recognition. No wonder that in her evening dress Aurora awoke but a dreamy memory of her whom he had seen, clad in a habit, riding a mountain-pony up a lonely green hillside. She was a phantom of delight in that solitary land of lakes, where Paul was sojourning awhile, the guest of a famous poet; she had flashed upon him suddenly, a vision, an apparition, but she had left her photograph imprinted on his brain. And now he met, amid the crowd of Regent Street, her whom he had once seen on the side of Helvellyn. It seemed a marvellous coincidence.

Aurora also recognized him. This girl had a wonderful memory. Moreover, if

a young creature, impressible and imaginative, in the quiet heart of the mountains, encounters a solitary stranger, the romance of the scene is not unlikely to transfigure him into a hero, and the common-place young gentleman will dwell in her mind as a possible Lancelot or Galabad. It was not quite this with Aurora; but she recollected Paul Veryan the moment she saw him, and there came back upon her in that crowded thoroughfare a vision of lonely hills, sublimely silent. I am not certain that the two did not instantly understand one another, and recognize the recognition. But they said to each other no word about it. It seemed a secret, not to be profaned by mention in the throbbing centre of London.

The young ladies were going to dine with Hogmire at the "London," and then proceed to some place of entertainment.

Paul Veryan silently determined to get away early from Eastbury's dinner, and go to the theatre in question. He did not want to lose sight of her whom he had seen once—it seemed so long ago—and whom he had never expected to see again. Meanwhile, there was this dinner to be eaten.

It was a tiresome affair: Veryan was preoccupied and dull. The wine was much as usual. Eastbury was full of somewhat vulgar chaff, which he inflicted upon Harington, under the impression that, as he paid him a salary, he had a right to be impertinent to him. At last Harington could stand it no longer, and rising from the table before coffee was served, said abruptly,

"I must be off. I've an article to write to-night. Come, Paul, if you're ready."

And so they went, Veryan remarking as they came downstairs that it was a mercy to get away from bad jokes and poisonous claret.

Harington, somewhat savage, went straight home; Paul Veryan, as you will guess, did quite otherwise.

I shall not say whether the theatre to which he went was the Vivacity, or the Sensation, or the Burlesque, or the Old Hummums, or the Young London: I shall simply say that there were stalls, and a saloon, and that the redoubtable Hogmire was in a private box with the two young ladies. Need it be added that when Paul Veryan, about half way through the performance, entered his stall, Miss Brabazon and Miss Elmore almost instantly noticed and recognised him? Truth to tell, the performance that evening was not brilliant; and, indeed, I believe that

young ladies in general, after they have seen a little of things theatrical, care much more for what is before the curtain than for what is behind. If they have pleasant companions in their box, they enjoy a quiet flirtation in preference to the ordinary drama of the period : there is more high comedy off the stage than on it in these neoteric times. And if they have not such companions, can they be blamed for looking round the theatre for creatures a little more like human beings than those upon the boards ? As Motteux sayeth—

“ Man is for woman made,
And woman made for man :
As the spur is for the jade,
As the scabbard for the blade,
As for liquor is the can,
So man's for woman made,
And woman made for man.”

I agree with Peter Anthony, most erudite and racy renderer of Rabelais.

Well, Aurora and Agnes saw our friend Paul; noticed, moreover, that when an interval occurred, he, apparently tired of the business, left his stall. Feminine instinct (it could not be experience) told them that he would be thirsty, so they instantly informed the uncle that they needed refreshment, and should like some ices in the saloon. Thither they went. There was Paul, talking to an actor. Ensued some clever by-play. Aurora Elmore's eyes told Paul in an instant that he was not to recognise her, and he accordingly did not. Hogmire, the most amiable and servile of men where young ladies were concerned, got for his companions all they needed: meantime Paul and his histrionic acquaintance, standing within a few feet of their table, chatted deviously.

"By Jove!" said the actor, in what he

would probably call a stage whisper, "those two charming young ladies look at you every now and then as if they knew you."

"Which?" said Paul. "Oh, those. Don't know them in the least, I assure you."

This scrap of dialogue occurred within a few inches of the illustrious Hogmire, who was getting more sherry, or something of the sort. He gnashed his teeth.

Veryan returned to his stall, but not until the uncle and his fair friends had gone back to their box. When the performance was over it may be assumed that he was in the atrium. Leaning against a column, he indolently gazed at the long line of beauty that descended the staircases in a cascade of colour, and spilt itself over the wide hall in groups of gaiety. By-and-by came down the trio he desired to

see. Hogmire left the girls in a special corner, and departed to seek a cab.

Now was Paul's opportunity. He crossed to where they stood, and entered into conversation for a moment.

"I must not intrude to-night, I see," he said to Miss Elmore. "That elderly gentleman looks like an uncle."

"He is an uncle," laughingly replied Aurora. "But don't call him elderly. He thinks himself in the prime of life."

"And a model of manly beauty," continued Paul. "Well, such illusions make up a good deal of the happiness of existence. But I must not stay here, as he will have found his cab in a minute or two. I wish you were going to sup at the Pall Mall to-night. I might have the pleasure of seeing you."

"We are," said Aurora.

Whereon Paul returned to his column and carefully selected a cigar.

"O Miss Elmore!—O Aurora!" whispered shy Agnes Brabazon, who, having relapsed into a school-girl, regarded her friend and instructress as a marvel of dignity and decorum. "How *could* you say we were going there? You know Mr. Hogmore intends to go straight home."

"He'll go where I tell him, child," said Aurora in reply. "And I like Mr. Veryan rather; he seems a gentleman."

"But Mr. Hogmire will be so angry if he finds out."

"You ridiculous little thing! What is his anger to me? But see, here he comes."

He came, hot and irritated, having had immense difficulty in finding a vehicle. At length however it had arrived, and they went out. Having put the ladies into the cab, and told the driver where to go, he was just about to enter, when a fellow asked him to give him something for

calling the said cab. An altercation ensued, during which Paul Veryan got round the other side, opened the door, told the driver to proceed, and had the pleasure of convoying the ladies to the Pall Mall.

Meanwhile, Hogmire, having got rid of his man, found that he had lost his cab, and had to walk through several streets before he could obtain another.

"Confound it!" he soliloquized. "I suppose they are gone on to the Pall Mall. What a nuisance these beggars are! Aurora is a self-willed animal; but I can't help liking her. And yet I don't know whether that little Miss Brabazon isn't nicer. Well, well, we shall have a jolly little supper."

Poor Hogmire! He was a kind of feeble Don Juan—not brilliant, not handsome, not young—and married. Yet did he verily believe that he was born for

the fascination of females, the subjugation of the sex. Happy Hogmire!

When he reached the Pall Mall he found the girls seated at a table and waiting for him. At a table not very remote a waiter was standing, receiving the orders of a gentleman whom Hogmire recollected seeing in the saloon of the theatre. That order was brief enough.

"Clicquot and birds," said Paul Veryan.

"How long you have been!" said Miss Elmore. "The stupid cabman drove away without you. Shall we have Clicquot and birds too?"

CHAPTER XV.

THE THAUMATURGICAL COMMISSION.

"If you should ask, what pleases best?
To get the most, and do the least:
What fittest for? You know, I'm sure;
I'm fitted for—a sinecure."

Fielding to Walpole.

THE morning after this little theatrical episode witnessed Paul Veryan's first visit to the offices of the Thaumaturgical Commission. He found a large old house, built apparently in Queen Anne's days, devoted to this important affair. In a spacious entrance hall sat a porter, sufficiently massive and magnificent for a ducal residence. Paul, whom nobody knew, had to introduce himself; he pass-

ed through several rooms, in which some gentlemanly clerks appeared to be reading the papers, and was shown at last into the chief clerk's room. That gentleman, who bore the name of Staley, was a keen little man of about fifty, with a gray beard, and very scanty hair. He received his superior officer with much *empressement*.

"Glad to see you here, sir. Mr. Eliot, the late Secretary, sir, has just gone into Parliament, as no doubt you know. His rooms have been put in order for you. You'll find them comfortable."

Paul *did* find them comfortable, not to say luxurious. They were a first-floor suite at the back of the house, looking on the park. There were ante-rooms, reception-rooms, a private room, and a *more* private room; while in the suite above there were sitting-rooms, bed-rooms,

dressings-rooms, bath-rooms. They were quite liveable quarters.

"Mr. Eliot, sir," said Staley, "found the principal reception-room made a capital dining-room. He used to give a good many dinners. And he gave a grand ball once, in my Lords the Commissioners' room—which perhaps you'd like to see?"

A splendid saloon this, the whole breadth of the house, with a vaulted ceiling, covered with mythological figures by Thornhill, or some such artist, and great portraits in the old oak panelling. When Paul had examined everything—surveying his own quarters, it must be admitted, with sufficient satisfaction—he said to Mr. Staley,

"Well, now as to the business of the office?"

"Business, sir?" he said, in a tone that

savoured of surprise. "O the business goes on very quietly, very quietly indeed. My Lords have a meeting on the eleventh—yes, it *is* the eleventh—when, of course, you'll like to be here. But it is our slack time just now—we are not at all busy. Mr. Eliot was always away at this time of year."

"Well, but, my dear sir, there must be something for me to do," said the verdant Paul. "There is, of course, a great deal of correspondence on matters connected with the Commission?"

"We shouldn't think of troubling you with that, sir; we shouldn't indeed. I look at a few of the letters which arrive, but most that come are easily answered by the clerks. You see, sir, there is seldom anything more to be done than just filling up a printed form. Of course you will get private letters from my

Lords occasionally, but they generally refer to troublesome people, who *will* make direct application to one of the Commissioners, instead of communicating with the Secretary."

Paul Veryan began to perceive that, at least under Mr. Eliot's *regime*, the office which he now held had been a sinecure in the highest sense of that charming word. It occurred to him, however, that this was perhaps not precisely what Parliament intended when it established the same Thaumaturgical Commission. What wonders the Commission had hitherto worked, or was by its originators designed to work, he failed clearly to discover; though he carefully examined the minutes of its meetings, and all the other documents which he found in his official bureaux. The sole discovery which he did make was that his predecessor,

the lively Mr. Eliot, had a ready pencil for caricature, and a ready pen for comic verse: the Secretary's portfolios were filled with specimens of both these social arts. There were graphic likenesses of the three Lords Commissioners scattered everywhere: the new Secretary had the advantage of ascertaining the peculiarities of his superiors before he made their acquaintance.

He did not imitate Mr. Eliot and go out of town, though the chief clerk wondered to see him day after day at the office. One morning he received a letter from the Commissioner whom Lord Latimer had described as "an exasperating Radical Viscount." He was a brand-new Viscount, having been previously a Baronet. His letter was sealed with a coat of arms that would have astonished a Count of the Holy Roman Empire:

there was no surpassing the thickness of his note-paper, or the magniloquence of his sesquipedalian style. His communication merely informed the Secretary that he should be in town on the following day, and intended to call at the office of the Commission.

Accordingly he came; a little withered man, who gave the idea of attempting to look bigger than his natural size. Lord Chatteris would evidently have liked to appear larger than did Sir Everard Hill, Baronet. When Veryan waited upon him in his private room, he said,

“Good morning, Mr. Veryan. Glad to see you installed in office. A friend of Lord Latimer’s, I believe. His lordship wears well, I hope. I don’t agree with his politics, but I have a great respect for him.”

Paul replied that the Earl was very well when he last saw him.

"He is a wonderful man. I wish he was one of us, instead of the Duke of Rougemont or the Bishop of Idlechester. Do you know either of my brother Commissioners?"

"I have not that honour, my lord."

"Ah!" said the Viscount, evidently pleased thereat. "Well, the Duke, you know, is a very estimable nobleman, but then he is a Tory, quite an old-fashioned Tory, out of date in these times of enlightenment and progress. Besides, he suffers a good deal from gout; and he hates coming to London, at which I am not surprised, for Rougemont Castle is a glorious old place, and the estates around it are quite a principality. I'm sure I wonder his Grace consents to be a Commissioner."

Paul could have told him why, for Lord Latimer had revealed the secret.

The Commission was appointed during Lord Riverdale's Administration; and the Premier had specially requested the Duke of Rougemont to be a member of it.

"We *must* have a Bishop," he said, "and we *must* have a Radical: we want somebody who will be quietly and influentially obstructive."

"Thank you," said the Duke, with a smile. "After such a compliment, I cannot refuse."

Lord Chatteris went on to describe the Bishop—

"Bishop Winter is awfully clever, but crotchety, impracticable. He never seems to look at anything in the same light as ordinary people. He was a school-master before he was a Bishop, and he *will* quote Greek. Now, although I went to Eton and Oxford, I can't say I remember much of that language, so that

it becomes rather a nuisance. The Duke always laughs at his quotations, though I don't know whether he understands them."

Paul, recollecting that the Duke, when he was Lord Lessingham, had produced a translation of the *Birds* of Aristophanes, which was in some respects superior to both Frere and Mitchell, thought it possible that he quite comprehended Dr. Winter's causticities.

Lord Chatteris had evidently come to town to see what the new Secretary was like, and to have a preliminary conversation with him. He went away not altogether dissatisfied.

"A steadier fellow than Eliot," he said to himself. "Eliot was always full of what I suppose he calls wit. I call it impertinence. This young man seems well-behaved, at any rate."

If the Viscount could have seen a letter which Paul that day wrote to Lord Latimer, describing the interview, I fear he would have materially altered his opinion.

Some days later came the periodical meeting of the Commission. There was a slight stir in the old-fashioned house at Westminster. The gentlemanly clerks grew less absorbed in the morning papers, and made a feint of having something to do. The superb porter was wide awake for once, and marvellously courteous. At noon precisely the great men arrived. His Grace the Duke of Rougemont took the chair, with the Bishop on his right and the Viscount on his left. Paul Veryan sat at the end of the long table, prepared to take minutes of the proceedings.

There was not much to do. A few grants of money to be made from a colossal fund which the Commission had to ad-

minister ; a few grants to refuse ; that was all. The only discussion of the day was caused by an application from the widow of a clergyman who died insolvent for a grant of money to her daughter on her approaching marriage. The deceased parson was an excellent man, but found it impossible to live on eight hundred a year—which is not an unusual case. Moreover, he had married the daughter of an Irish peer, who had not much aided him by economy. Now this lady, the Honourable Mrs. Townsend, had a daughter to marry, and coolly asked a few hundred pounds from the Thaumaturgical Commission. Her worthy papa, Lord Kilraddle, was a very staunch and bumptious Radical, and a great friend of Viscount Chatteris.

The Duke read the letter—a very characteristic production—and passed it on to the Bishop of Idlechester.

"Very laughable," said Dr. Winter, after glancing at it; "but of course quite untenable."

Whereupon he passed the lady's letter across the table to Lord Chatteris.

"Really, my lords," said the Viscount, after reading the letter very slowly, "I do not see why this proposition should not be entertained. An estimable clergyman dies, leaving his family in narrow circumstances, the consequence, no doubt, of his ready charity. Surely when his only daughter requires help, we should not be too literal, too niggardly, in the construction of our duties."

"How old does the Honourable Mrs. Townsend say her daughter is?" asked the Duke of Veryan, who was making a minute of the letter.

"In her seventeenth year, your Grace."

Κακὸν γυναῖκα πρὸς νέαν γαμῶν νόον·
μακρὰ γὰρ ἰσχύς μᾶλλον ἀρσένων μένει,
θήλεια δ' ἤβη θᾶσσον ἐκλείπει σέβας·

This was the Bishop's remark, of course ; and caused the Duke to smile, and the Viscount to frown.

"I really do not see how the application can be entertained," continued the Bishop. "The young lady should be sent to an orphan asylum, instead of being married."

"I quite agree with you," said the Duke. "Be so good as to write a reply to that effect, Mr. Veryan."

So the Viscount was foiled, and the Honourable Mrs. Townsend had to marry her daughter without a portion, if she contrived under those circumstances to marry her at all. And the Commissioners, having sat about an hour and a half, adjourned for a month.

As to Paul Veryan, having finished the very small portion of the correspondence which he could not transfer to Mr. Staley, he strolled into the Park with a cigar. It was perhaps only a curious coincidence that, as he approached the steps which lead to the Duke of York's column, he encountered two young ladies of our acquaintance, Miss Elmore and Miss Brabazon. At any rate, they both seemed very glad to see him.

CHAPTER XVI.

DOUBLE ENTANGLEMENT.

“ Out upon it, I have loved
Three whole days together,
And am like to love three more,
If it proves fair weather.”

PAUL VERYAN found two notes on his table the next morning. One was from Lord Latimer, running thus:—

“DEAR MR. VERYAN,

“Can you lunch with me to-day at two? Lucy and I are in town for a few hours only.

“Yours very faithfully,

“LATIMER.”

The old Earl wrote a much clearer

hand than Paul's other correspondent, whose scrawl was thus decypherable:—

“Come to the Opera to-night, old fellow. The Dezii has a supper afterwards, and wants me to bring you.

“Thine,

“T. H.”

Paul replied affirmatively to both invitations, as a matter of course, and wondered all the morning whether Lady Lucy was as charmingly coquettish as ever—and how he should like Diana Dezii.

Lord Latimer had one of those charming houses in Park Lane which Lord Lytton has inimitably described. They are, I regret to say, getting rarer; the rage for immense mansions is rendering it almost impossible to get a *bijou* of a house, a *maisonnette*, a place that

does not unpleasantly impress you with its vastness. If I were the inhabitant of one of the huge places which every modern millionaire builds for himself, I should feel it crushing me down like an unendurable nightmare, and should rush away to some two-roomed cottage on a breezy common, where I could breathe. The best room in the world is that which has the sky for roof and the turf for a carpet.

To the Earl's pleasant home in Park Lane Paul Veryan proceeded at two, and found Lady Lucy alone.

"Papa has not come in yet," she said. "He had to go into the City, and thought he might perhaps be detained, and told me to apologize to you."

Paul deemed no apology requisite, as may well be supposed ; and very soon

Lady Lucy was sitting at the piano,
and carolling like a bird.

“O darling eyelids’ delicate droop!
O little sweet mouth, so red, so pure!
Here in the twilight while I stoop
Beautiful Amoret looks demure.
There’s a word to whisper—who can guess?
Will it be no, sweet? Will it be yes?”

“Listen the flowers that word to learn
Which the little sweet mouth must say to me:
Faintly it flutters the fairy fern:
What will it be, O what will it be?
O love grows greater, the world grows less—
Will it be no, sweet? Will it be yes?”

This, I think, was the quaint little song
wherewith Lady Lucy was intoxicating
our hero when Lord Latimer entered
the drawing-room. His arrival was the
signal for luncheon.

“How do you get on with the Com-
missioners?” inquired the Earl. “Rouge-
mont dropped me a line to say he
thinks you’ll do—and that, you know,
is the great point. I need not tell you

that he is the most important personage on the Commission. When a Duke has half a million a year, and brains, he is a great power in England."

"I like the Bishop of Idlechester," said Paul.

"So do I," said Lord Latimer.

"O and so do I," exclaimed Lady Lucy. "He is such a deliciously satirical old gentleman."

"I very much doubt," said her father, "whether you could readily find three more people in London more enthusiastic in Dr. Winter's favour. He was born with a thorough contempt for humbug and pretension, in whatever rank he finds them. He likes Rougemont, not because he's a Duke, but because he's a man of ability: indeed, Winter won his bishopric through treating as he deserved a Duke of another order. A man who despises

humbug, and shows that he despises it, is not likely to be very popular."

"People who are not humbugs will like him, papa," said Lady Lucy, "and I hope there are plenty of them."

"Not quite so many as there were before crinoline and chignons were invented," said the Earl. "Do you find the work of the office hard, Mr. Veryan?"

"O don't overwork yourself, Mr. Veryan," said Lady Lucy. "It would be *such* a pity."

"There is not very much fear of that," rejoined Paul, with a smile. "I was going to ask your lordship whether I ought not to do something to expedite the business of the office, and save myself from being quite a sinecurist."

"I am very glad you thought of asking me before doing anything of the kind. *Surtout, point de zèle.* The Commission,

my dear sir, was extorted by the Radicals, and we put upon it an advanced Radical peer, and the most Liberal and intellectual Bishop on the bench; but we also put old Rougemont, because he's one of the two or three men in England whom nobody can hurry or frighten. He comes, you know, of a great Whig family, and calls himself a Whig, but he's Tory to the backbone. You may depend upon it that's the winning game in politics—call yourself a Whig and be a Tory. I wish I could call myself a Whig; but a man can't well do it who has served under Liverpool. However, take your cue from the Duke, and you'll get on capitally."

Paul felt that he was destined to be a sinecurist, of the most pronounced type.

"Will they not be asking questions about the Commission in the House?" he said.

"Likely enough. That's what we have Under-Secretaries for, to answer such questions. Some man will get up and make an awful onslaught on the Commission, and then you'll have the pleasure of reading a rejoinder from the Treasury bench, eulogizing to the utmost the three Commissioners, and bestowing unqualified praise on the energy and capacity of their able Secretary. You won't recognize yourself in the flattering portrait drawn of you."

"I wish you would stay in town to-night, papa," said Lady Lucy. "There is Signora Dezii in one of her best parts, and you know I have not heard her yet."

"It can't be managed," said the Earl. "You shall hear the Dezii, child. I thought of having some music at Loraine Park next month, and of engaging her and a few others. Will you come down,

Mr. Veryan? You need not plead heavy business, you know. Besides, we are only forty minutes from town, so you can easily run up if occasion requires."

I am afraid Paul, the reprobate, was delighted with the idea of a few days in Berkshire, under the same roof with Lady Lucy.

"I am quite effaced in my own neighbourhood," said the Earl, "by a man who has bought a huge park, and built a huge mansion, all picture-gallery and corridor, and has miles of street lamps in his grounds, and forces plantations of deodaras and Wellingtonias by laying hot-water pipes at the roots. He's a newspaper proprietor, I think. By the way, that reminds me of something I had nearly forgotten. That new journal, the *Rapier*—you know something about it, I think."

Paul answered affirmatively,

“ Well, if you call occasionally on Claude Montagu, whose office isn’t a stone’s throw from your own, he’ll give you just a suggestive hint of what’s going to be done, and you can let the public have a faint glimmer of light. I’ve told Montagu to expect you: he’s a capital fellow, and you’ll soon understand one another. And now I must move: the carriage will be round in ten minutes.”

“ We shall expect you at Loraine Park,” were Lady Lucy’s last words.

As Paul left the house, he noticed on the other side of the way, leaning against the immortal railings, a young fellow whose face he seemed to recognise. Where had he seen him before? He was a lank-haired personage, dressed, as one says, respectably; not a gentleman, nor yet a gentleman’s servant; one

of those undefinable people who may be anything you please, from a draper's assistant to an usher in a school.

"I've seen that fellow before," said Paul to himself; and then he walked into the Park through Grosvenor Gate, and lighted a cigar, and sauntered towards Rotten Row, reflecting on things in general, and his own luck in particular.

Euripides says—

δεῖ τοὺς μὲν εἶναι δυστυχεῖς, τοὺς δ' εὐτυχεῖς.

Paul Veryan had all his life been accustomed to the permanent *δυστυχία* to which the great dramatist referred; and he was almost as much puzzled as pleased by the change in his luck which appeared to have occurred. He felt that it was in all likelihood appearance only—nothing more. The perverse fate which had hitherto ruled his affairs would surely return

upon him again, playing him some scoundrelly scurvy trick just when he found himself in smooth water, with a favouring breeze wafting him toward the happy islands. Paul had been so long an unlucky man that it made him occasionally cynical. Moreover, having a disposition to believe in the interposition of præternatural entities in human affairs, he could not help fancying that his present bit of good fortune was just a trick played him by some mischievous demon, whose intent it was to supplement it with worse luck than ever.

His reveries might be dull matter to transcribe, so I let them pass. After a lounge in Rotten Row, he returned to his own quarters; there, finding on his table a new poem of Browning's, he read till dinner-time. Having dined, he returned to the poem, which, with the

help of a cigar, he began to enjoy, notwithstanding the difficulties which our greatest living poet insists on throwing in his reader's way: and I believe he would have forgotten Diana Dezii altogether, if his valet (for Paul, the rascal, had set up a valet, and a very good fellow of his sort) had not reminded him that he intended to go to the Opera. Paul's valet, I may remark, was an Irishman, and his name was Denis O'Brien.

"I must go," said our hero, throwing down *The Ring and the Book*, and stretching himself with indolent reluctance. "I'll go and dress, Denis. Call a hansom in ten minutes."

So Paul threw himself into his dress clothes, pulled up in Parliament Street for a flower, and then found his way to Covent Garden. The Dezii was singing like a seraph. Tom Harington was in his

stall, absorbed, intoxicated with music. And, by Jove, up in a box in the second tier there was old Hogmire, with Aurora and Agnes.

"Well," soliloquized Paul Veryan, "I don't know how it is, but I seem to see more girls in a day now than I used to see in a month. I should greatly enjoy a chat with Miss Elmore to-night, but it can't well be done without murdering her atrocious old uncle, which perhaps might not be proper. Thank Heaven, there's no harm in looking at the child through an opera-glass!"

Which he did accordingly.

Now, it had occurred to Paul's valet, the aforesaid Denis O'Brien, that he also should like to hear some music: besides which, the good fellow, like many of the despised Irish race, was very fond of his master, and liked to follow him whither-

soever he went. Hence it happened that Mr. O'Brien left the offices of the Thaumaturgical Commission ten minutes after he had called a cab for Veryan; and his first proceeding was to enter a public-house in the neighbourhood, where he indulged in the beverage which Hibernians love, and found himself in conversation with a gentlemanly young fellow, who seemed to know all about him, and his master, and his master's secretaryship. His new acquaintance was very pleasant, and very liberal in the matter of whiskey; but it presently occurred to Denis O'Brien—one of the most unsuspicious of an unsuspicious race—that he seemed to take an unaccountable interest in Mr. Veryan.

“Shure, now,” thought Denis, “he can’t be a bailiff—the masther has taken to paying his debts lately. Besides, the young fellow washes occasionally, and doesn’t

carry a stick. Holy Vargin! suppose he's one of those private inquiry thieves—and they're trying to get up a divorce case against him. He's rather a likely boy, I'm afraid. I'll thry the omadhaun."

The consequence whereof was that Denis's simplicity became more verdant than ever, and that he told his new acquaintance (who had informed him that his name was Smith) that Mr. Veryan was gone to the Opera, he believed to meet a lady, and that he rather thought of going too. It is not surprising that Smith volunteered to go likewise, and to pay for both. And the Englishman and Irishman went off together in a state of thorough cronyism, the former imagining that he had quite taken in his companion, and entertaining no suspicion that it was rather the other way.

They sat together in the amphitheatre,

and Denis pointed out his master to Mr. Smith. Lots of questions did the said Smith ask, which the Irishman answered as none save an Irishman can answer questions. Those very questions, however, had their significance for Denis; and he even succeeded so far in fathoming his companion as to ascertain that there was some connection between him and a rather ugly-looking specimen of humanity who was in a box with two very charming young ladies.

When everybody emerged from the theatre, Paul made a push to catch Tom Harington, but did not succeed in his attempt.

"Confound it!" he muttered, "what the deuce am I to do? Better go home, I suppose, and give up the supper; only I *should* like to meet the little cantatrice, and see if the bird pecks as prettily as it sings. Hallo!"

This exclamation was caused by his almost tumbling over his own valet on the steps of the portico; *with* his valet was Mr. Smith, who shuffled away rapidly, but not before Paul's quick eye had recognised him.

"Denis, you scoundrel!" he said, "what are you doing here? And who's that fellow with you?"

"I'll tell you all about him, your honour, but not now. He's the thief of the world. Shall I call a cab, Mr. Veryan?"

"Yes—a four-wheel. Get outside, and drive to the Albion."

At that unrivalled tavern, where supper is a thing thoroughly understood, Paul met, as he expected, some one who could tell him the Dezii's address. It was far away in the streets they call "Gardens" at Kensington. Your *lucus a non lucendo* is a permanent law of nomenclature. Paul

was off in a hansom at once, with a parting word to Denis.

"Go straight home, O'Brien," he said. "To-morrow at breakfast I'll hear what you have to say."

Did Denis go straight home? Not at all. He receded to the other side of the street, and, from the shadow of the Drury-Lane colonnade, was not surprised to see another hansom start from the stand in swift pursuit of the vehicle which bore his master.

"That Smith is up to some mischief," thought the Irishman. "I've nothing to do; I'll go down to Kensington myself."

Meanwhile let us follow Paul Veryan. He reached the actress's charming house in Verulam Gardens, and was at once admitted. There was a joyous party, and Tom Harington was the very life of it. The Dezii welcomed his friend with *em-*

pressement; the supper was artistic and delicious, just suited to operatic birds of paradise; there seemed to escape a lyric with every cork that set free the imprisoned Røderer. The dark-eyed delight of the stage was even more delightful at home; there was in her nature that easy gaiety which one sees in the women of Italy more than any other women. Locker, in one of his exquisite Roman reveries, describes a flower-girl in the Aldobrandini:—

“A girl came with violet posies, and two
Gentle eyes, like her violets, laden with dew,
And a kind of an indolent, fine-lady air,
As if she by accident found herself there.”

An Italian girl will sell violets in a pleasant artistic fashion, whereas an English girl who offers flowers for sale is always a ragged whining little beggar. An Italian singer sings because she cannot help it, like a lark or a nightingale;

the music is throbbing beneath her beautiful white bosom, and out it must come. This charming Diana burst into song on the slightest provocation, or without any provocation at all; and, as she had taken a great fancy to Paul (much to Harington's disgust), her spontaneous song was this night more frequent than ever.

She took a fancy to Paul, as I have said: it was instinctive, and it was reciprocal. Harington had been flirting with her for I know not how long: but he could never make a serious impression on her—or, indeed, on any woman. There was a distinct difference of character between the two men. Harington, though a great admirer of women, with whom indeed their pursuit became a frenzy, could not *love* a woman, could not thoroughly love anybody save himself. Vryan, less at home in woman's

society, not gifted with that brilliant ease which his friend exhibited, was yet a man capable of love—capable, though he might not himself suspect it, of a *grande passion*. Men don't see these supersubtle differences, but the dullest woman ever created discerns them on the instant. The Dezii was not the dullest woman created: she saw the difference at once, and neglected Tom Harington, though he had overwhelmed her with diamond rings and delicious bouquets, and became intensely intimate with Paul.

Tom Harington became, as was his wont, sulky, and drank neat brandy recklessly. The Dezii did not take the least notice of him, being quite unconscious of his ferocity, and as happy as a bird. So Tom flirted with other members of the company; and when tired of that, smoked and drank; and by-and-by sank

into a sullen conversation with Diana's cousin, Giuseppe Dezii, who was a member of the orchestra at the Opera. Older than the beautiful *prima donna*, Giuseppe was an atrociously ugly likeness of her. I think he was in love with his cousin. He always scowled hideously at anybody she seemed to favour; and this night his evil eye glared much upon Paul Veryan.

Little recked Paul. The Dezii was singing the gay Venetian barcarotte—

“Io vo un basin d'amore,
Fidelin,
Chi quel mi paghera,
Colla bella sua bocca,
Colla bella se ne va,
Fidelin, lin, là.”

The song seemed to fill her and thrill through her, as if she were a crystal vase filled by some invisible hand with the sparkling wine which the immortals drink. Paul listened delightedly, forget-

ing everything and everybody else in the delirium of the moment.

You can't describe these things. The night passed: it was daylight, indeed, when the revellers emerged into the air. Early workmen were already in the streets. Not a cab was visible, so Veryan and Harington, and a third man, who was somebody's private secretary, lighted cigars and walked eastward together. They turned into Kensington Gardens, where men were mowing the turf, and the vernal flowers were moist with dew. They did not talk much. There is no real harm in a joyous supper, with wine and wit and song, even though the sun arise upon your revels; yet the purity and regularity of nature seem silently to rebuke the reveller, as he walks homeward, wondering whether it is worth while to go to bed.

When they reached Piccadilly, cabs were abundant.

"What shall you do, Tom?" asked Veryan.

"Go home and sleep till dinner-time," he answered, as he got into his cab.

"Good night to you. I shall take the first train to Oceanborough, sleep all the way down, and have a dip in the sea."

Paul drove home, let himself in, packed a small bag with a few necessities, and then, without anybody's knowing anything about it, made his way to Victoria.

CHAPTER XVII.

BED.

"Quid concupiscam quaeris ergo? dormire."

I SAID that nobody was aware of Paul Veryan's ingress and egress that morning. This however is not quite true: Growl and Wagtail were asleep in his room (their custom whether he was at home or not), and woke up to greet him, and became excited when they saw him pack his bag, and were sadly disappointed when he went away without them. But Paul's head was too full of women for him to do his duty by his dogs: so he walked off carelessly, and just refreshed himself with some

brandy and seltzer at Victoria, and then went deliberately to sleep in his carriage, and did not wake till the train reached Oceanborough.

He remained there a couple of days, indulging in reverie. It was not the season at that pleasant haunt of fashion: so of course he met no creature whom he knew. The waiters at his hotel did not disguise their wonder at his being there. The vast coffee-room was a desert. The pier was like a path through the Great Sahara. Paul smoked a series of solitary cigars, and dined every day in a corner of the coffee-room, and indulged in reverie. He was trying to solve a problem. He had met again, by a curious accident, a woman whom he had seen suddenly in distant solitudes, and whose apparition had left on him an indelible impress. But he had met

her in the whirl of London, in the vortex of the metropolis: and at the same moment his own position had been suddenly changed: and at the same moment he had become acquainted with several other women, each charming in her way. Even little Agnes Brabazon had her special fascinations. But Lady Lucy was deliciously unique, and so was Diana Dezii. And Paul found himself in a state of curious perplexity; unable definitely to decide whether he was in love with either of these girls, and if so, with which.

He stayed a few days at Oceanborough. Mr. Staley was delighted, and began to think that Paul would be a worthy successor to Mr. Eliot. One afternoon he suddenly determined to return to London. His perplexity, like Lentinus's fever, had stuck to him everywhere.

"Gestatur tecum sella, pariterque lavatur ;
Coenat boletos, ostrea, sumen, aprum."

He got to town in time to snatch a hasty dinner, and dress, and go to the Opera. The Dezii was singing divinely, acting superbly. Her *rôle* was tragic—a presentment of anguish unutterable, of cruel fate turning passionate love to hatred most intense. She seemed like a beautiful evil angel. She was at war with all the gods, and defied the divinities. Her wonderful bright eyes flashed with the angry fire of rebellion; her tremulous lips quivered with fury, and her fair white throat throbbed madly, as her magnificent voice filled the great theatre, climbing to its utmost height through the wild melody by which a mighty master of music had given voice to a supreme scorn of the Supreme.

Paul Veryan was exhausted by the

infinite power of the song. The Dezii had left the stage, but her miraculous voice still echoed in his brain. He passed out from his stall into the corridor, and thence to the portico, seeking fresh air. He walked up and down until he knew that the Opera must be near its end, and then went round to the stage door and sent up his card to Signora Dezii.

Paul was mad that night, I think. He took the *prima donna* by storm. Though a great tragic actress, she had no depth of passion in her. She was rather a gay little bird, with a vocal organ whose power was a mystery and a wonder to herself. To the poet, you know, the song of the nightingale in the melancholy midnight eternally repeats the sorrow of Daulis: how Swinburne, in his lyric of *Itylus*—how Arnold, by the sweet tranquil Thames—have rendered in imperishable words the

bird's strange agony! But verily the bird is a commonplace creature enough, with no recollection of King Pandion, and with a very decided liking for worms. Now our marvellous Diana sang magnificent music with a voice full of passion and pain: but when it was over she wanted a nice little supper and some easy flirtation.

So, when Paul Veryan, suddenly intoxicated with the belief that he was madly in love with her, burst into a fervent declaration which I am not going to describe, the Dezii was rather astonished. Some people would have been frightened, but she wasn't. She shared the general belief of her countryfolk that all Englishmen are mad, and made up her mind that Paul was a madder specimen than usual. She would not let him come home to sup with her, but made an appointment with him for the following morning at

twelve, and went quietly away under the guardianship of her cousin Giuseppe.

It was early. Paul, in no humour for going home, sauntered into one or two clubs in search of a friend. He had not the fortune to meet anybody he cared about; and so, after a few oysters and a pint of Chablis, lounged homeward at about midnight.

Denis was up, and evidently wanted to talk about the mysterious personage who had followed him to the Albion. But Paul was absorbed and impatient.

"To-morrow, Denis," he said. "I am tired out. Bring up my letters, if there are any. And don't come near my room in the morning till I ring. I want a good sleep."

But, again like Lentinus's fever, Paul's passion would not desert him even in his bed-chamber.

*"Circumfusa rosis et nigra recumbit amomo,
Dormit et in pluma, purpureoque toro.*

Paul Veryan didn't go in for roses and amomum; but he liked pillows of down and enjoyed a big sleep. He could have said with the epigrammatist :

*"Ingenti fruor, improboque somno,
Quem nec tertia saepe rumpit hora."*

So he was determined to sleep off some of his cares on the present occasion; and as he sat in his dressing-gown before a wood fire, lazily turning over a heap of letters which he did not care to open, it seemed likely enough that he would have his way.

The Fates were adverse. Growl and Wag generally delighted to stretch themselves before a cosy fire, were in a fidgety state, and went sniffing about the room in a most exasperating way.

"Confound those dogs!" said Veryan.
"Why the deuce can't they be quiet?"

They couldn't, or they wouldn't. They would settle down for a minute or two, and then get up and walk about, sniffing inquisitively in all corners of the room.

"Rats, I suppose," soliloquized Paul. "We must get a fellow in with some ferrets. What a lark to have a rat hunt on the premises sacred to Her Majesty's Thaumaturgical Commissioners! D'ye think you could kill a thaumaturgical rat, Growl, my boy?"

By and by Paul turned in, and tried very hard to sleep. Now there is nothing more delicious than sleep, when it comes freely, and drowns your cares in Lethe: while there is no greater nuisance than to want to sleep, and to be unable to approach the frontier of the Land of Nod. Paul was incurably restless; he lay watching the flickering flames of his fire; his head was full of his recent adventures,

of Lord Latimer and Mr. Thorold, of Aurora, and Lady Lucy, and the Dezii.

But in time fatigue—for he was physically and mentally tired—overcame him, and he fell into a doze at last. And then the worried brain, relieved from the dominion of the will, began to play strange tricks with him. He was riding unimaginable nightmares. He was fighting duels with Hogmire. He was going to be hanged, and O'Brien's mysterious acquaintance was the hangman. He was drowning, with Professor Goskett tied round his neck to sink him. He was running away with Lady Lucy Latimer, and the old Earl was close on their track, firing revolvers at them. Aurora Elmore was running away with him, when Diana Dezii met them, and tried to stab him, only Growl and Wag flew at her throat just in time to prevent it.

He woke suddenly with a start. The two dogs were both on his bed, barking wildly, as if their throats would burst. The fire was not quite out. He could see a dark form by his bedside. He sprang out of bed suddenly, caught hold of the intruder, and dragged him towards the fire to see what he was like. The thrust of some sharp weapon into his arm caused him to relax his hold: the man sprang towards the window, with the dogs barking furiously at his heels. Paul rang his bell violently, and threw open the bed-room door—then sank back in a chair, faint from loss of blood. When Denis came up his master was insensible, and there was quite a pool of blood upon the floor. But it was only a wound in the fleshy part of the arm, after all: so O'Brien sent for Dr. Montagu, and meanwhile bandaged the limb, and got

his master to bed again. As to the fellow who inflicted the wound, he had got away through the window. There was a balcony outside, running from room to room, and communicating with a lofty porch, by means of which an active man could easily reach the ground.

But who was he? What was his object? These were the questions which perplexed Paul as he breakfasted comfortably in bed next morning, Denis waiting upon him like a woman, and his two dogs watching his proceedings with grave countenances.

"You didn't see the fellow, Denis?" he said.

"No, your honour. He was out of the window before I got up : and I thought your honour was killed entirely."

"If it hadn't been for the dogs it seems likely enough that I should," said

Paul. "But I can't understand what in the world anybody should attack me for. You've sent to the police, Denis."

"It's little good they'll do, in my opinion. But they're sent for, and I suppose they'll soon be here."

Denis was right. Inspector Shore, from Scotland Yard, was shortly announced, and almost at the same moment came Dr. Montagu, to pay Paul a second visit.

"You're all right, I see," said the doctor, cheerily. "No inflammation. Pulse quiet. You'll do well enough, but don't worry yourself. If you must read, try the *Pall Mall* and French novels. Eat fish, mutton cutlets, grilled chicken. You may have a little pale brandy and seltzer, with plenty of ice, if you're thirsty; and the best thing you can drink with your dinner is a pint of Sauterne. Don't let that policeman bother you; if

he asks you too many questions, let O'Brien kick him downstairs."

"Thank you, doctor," said Paul; "I'll carefully obey your instructions, especially as regards the policeman."

Off went the doctor at his usual rapid pace, and then the inspector commenced his investigations. He prowled about the place with infinite perseverance. He examined everybody who was in the house at the time. He almost frightened the female servants to death by his terrible way of twisting their answers so that they meant something quite different from what was intended: and one plump kitchen-maid, a descendant, probably, of Sterne's "foolish fat scullion," having confessed that in her childhood she had walked in her sleep, was impressed with the frightful probability that she had done so on this occasion and stabbed Mr.

Veryan, and wept hysterically for many hours afterwards. But with all his inquiries and searchings, Inspector Shore got no nearer to the truth; and Paul, who lay in bed with a volume of Gautier for companion, and listened at intervals to Denis's account of the progress of affairs, was very much amused with the spectacle. Virgilius begins his poetic essay on the proceedings of bees by inviting Maecenas to notice

"The admirable drama of small things,"

as a friend of mine felicitously renders

"Admiranda tibi levium spectacula rerum."

Well, it was a charming drama of small things for Paul, with worthy fussy stolid Inspector Shore for protagonist. I hope the wiseacres of Scotland Yard will not be offended by my comparison of them to bees: for myself, I fear it is rather an insult to the insects. And, as mine

yield me most delicious virgin honey, I should be very sorry to say a word that might annoy them. Always shall blue borage and sweet melilot surround their old-fashioned straw hives, so that year after year I may receive delectation from the fragrant essence of the flowers. Borage, it may be observed parenthetically, is also useful for claretcup.

Inspector Shore, after some hours of inspection, went away with his note-book full of memoranda, leaving a subordinate behind in charge. The subordinate was a ruddy young A. R. from the country, who had left the plough-tail because his sweetheart had married somebody else, and who was completely consoled by finding in London a sweetheart in every alternate area. What he was left in charge for, he did not precisely know; but he relished it amazingly, and made himself

quite agreeable in the kitchen, where cold beef and cooper were produced in his honour.

In the course of the afternoon Veryan received a call from Westbrook, who was rather surprised to find his friend in bed.

"Well, my boy," said Westbrook, when he had heard the story, "your recent career rather upsets your theory as to your own destiny. You were to be a failure in life, if you remember, the last time we were on the Thames together. Here you are, a Secretary with a splendid salary and nothing to do—and a hero of romance with a hole through your arm. I should like to know whom you have been flirting with lately. And so the police have found out nothing?"

"Nothing, so far as I can see."

"Where could the fellow have been hidden?"

"In the bath-room, I fancy."

Westbrook entered this room, and examined it carefully.

"Nothing here," he said, "except a shirt-button. That's rather a small clue, even if we were sure it belonged to the assassin, and not to you or Denis. How did the fellow get away?"

"Through the window and along the balcony. He must have slipped down a column of the porch."

"An active fellow," said Westbrook. "I'll just take a look at the scene of his athletic performance."

He went accordingly—doing what Inspector Shore had not thought of. At the corner, where the fugitive had to stride over a railing, a piece of gray cloth was caught upon the spike. But this was not all. The top of the porch was a flat square, with a railing on each

side of it: nobody could have got over this railing and descended to the column with anything in his hand. The fugitive, in his headlong haste, had found it requisite to throw down something which he carried: there it lay at the corner just above the column—the weapon which he had used. Westbrook brought it back in triumph.

“Look here, Paul,” he exclaimed. “Oughtn’t they to make me Chief of the Detectives?”

Paul Veryan examined the weapon with much interest. It was a pretty little straight dagger, with a cruciform ebony handle. On the bright steel blade was cut the expressive word “*Through!*”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DINNER AT RICHMOND.

"If Care were not the waiter
 Behind a fellow's chair,
 When easy-going sinners
 Sit down to Richmond dinners,
 And life's swift stream flows straighter,
 By Jove, it would be rare—
 If Care were not the waiter
 Behind a fellow's chair."

IT was the height of summer, and the
 height of the season. The heat of
 the summer and the crush of the season
 were both unprecedented. Everybody
 was in town, and especially Phœbus
 Apollo. Upon the sultriest of possible
 Wednesdays a dinner was fixed at the

Star and Garter at Richmond. It was to be a very charming little affair indeed; the women all divine, and the men all sensible and pleasant. Somehow or other, things of this kind, when very carefully planned, turn out in some way or other failures. This did.

Paul Vervan went down with Lionel Thorold, M.P. for Oceanborough, who drove over Wimbledon Common and through the Park in a mail phaeton. On his way Thorold became communicative and confidential, and told Vervan as a profound secret that he had good hopes of winning the hand of Lady Lucy Latimer. Paul, though of course he had not the least notion of asking Lady Lucy to marry him, was very surly nevertheless.

Tom Harington went down by train, in company with the proprietor of the *Rapier*, who had a house at Richmond.

Eastbury was a disappointed man. When he put money into the journal above mentioned, it was with the impression that the Ministry would reward him with a sinecure. The Ministry was on the point of going out, yet no sinecure had been offered him. He had bored his friend Sir Clifford Pynes on the subject, until that baronet found it absolutely necessary to refuse him admission. So Eastbury was getting tired of the business: and, being a thorough cad, he was doing his best to revenge himself for his disappointment on the people he employed. Harington, not the most patient of men, was terribly tried by the fellow: and now, as ill-luck would have it, they met at Waterloo.

“Going down to dine at the Star and Garter, I suppose, Mr. Harington,” said Eastbury, in a sneering tone. “You lite-

rary gents don't mind what you spend in Champagne."

"I am going to meet a few friends," said Tom.

"Ah, I hope you'll enjoy it."

After which he sat silent for some time. The two men were alone in the carriage.

By-and-by he began again.

"I am going to sell the *Rapier*—I'm tired of it. It has not at all fulfilled my expectations. I've an offer of three thousand pounds for it—much less than I've lost by it—but still I think I shall accept."

"Who is the purchaser?" asked Harington.

"A man called Fulcrum—member for some place in Ireland. I know nothing about him, but I shall take his money."

"If the journal is worth three thousand

pounds to him, it ought to be worth three thousand to you."

"It *isn't*. What he means to do with it I didn't ask, for I don't care. However, he won't want an editor: he said his private secretary could do that business well enough."

After this conversation, need I say that Tom Harington, seeing his beloved *Rapier* passing into meaner hands, reached the Star and Garter in a savage frame of mind.

He met Veryan on the steps of the hotel, and they strolled into the garden together, as they were a trifle before their time. Harington told Paul of the change at the *Rapier* office.

"Egad," said Paul, "I see the dodge. Fulcrum's a nice rascal. I know all about him. He'll get subsidies from Vienna. Eastbury is an ass: he should have asked him five times the money."

"Very likely you're right," said Harrington, gloomily. "I'm glad to think that Eastbury is an ass."

Two of the company at this little dinner had, it will be seen, their reasons for being a trifle out of temper. I don't say they were good reasons. If we none of us lost our tempers except on good sound logical reasons, what a saccharine world it would be!

Now the best of dinners is not enjoyable when a man is out of temper. And one man in that state is quite enough to spoil the pleasantest party. He generally begins by being far more brilliant than his natural capacity justifies—he invariably ends by being savagely sulky and quarrelsome.

However, matters began very joyously this day. The festival was in honour of the Dezii, who came with a few of her

charming friends. The men were Thorold, Veryan, Harington, Westbrook. The first and last of these men you could not put out of temper—though for different reasons. Thorold managed himself carefully; laid down rules for his own guidance; was as attentive to his own mental peculiarities as to the affairs of his great estate. But Westbrook was endowed with that perfect temper, that godlike contempt for small things, which is the best of all endowments in a world of east winds and tight boots.

Dinner was over; claret on the table; the windows thrown wide. There was no moon, but a magnificence of starlight. The Milky Way was peculiarly distinct: the red planet Mars burnt high in heaven.

"The old poets," said Westbrook, "called the Milky Way Watling Street. It's in Chaucer: and I noticed it the other

day in looking at Gawaine Douglas's *Aeneid*. Fancy transferring the name of a street on earth to a street in the sky!"

"The Italians," said Tom Harington, who had been in Italy, and never allowed anyone to forget it, "call it the *Santa Strada di Loretto*."

"We wretched mortals try to write our transitory names upon the sky," said Paul. "A star is very bright. We call it by the name of the goddess of love."

"And you are right," said the Dezii, "you are right. What can have a lustre like love?"

"Gold, signora," said Paul. "Then look at that red star in the distance—small but intense and fierce. We call it Mars, because its light seems to typify our hot little quarrels."

"What is it the spectrum analysis tells us about the atmosphere of Mars?" asked Thorold.

"Why, that there is some gas in it unknown to this paler planet—or to any other planet," said Westbrook. "The inhabitants of Mars, if there are any, must inhale something different from oxygen and azote."

"It appears to me," said Paul, "that in all probability the existence of a new gas indicates the existence of a new sin. People who breathe a different air must have different ideas of wickedness. There is an eleventh Commandment in Mars, depend on it."

"A new sin means a new pleasure," said Tom Harington. "Let us migrate to Mars."

"Rather let us migrate to the terrace and smoke," said Thorold.

Thither they went, accordingly; and the Dezii sang a charming ballad, and the time passed pleasantly enough. But

the planet Mars, or some other influence, excited the elements of discord which existed in the party. Tom Harington flirted vehemently with the Dezii: Paul Veryan did his best to cut him out; then they said bitter and sarcastic things to one another, and at last the affair terminated in one of those thorough rows, quiet yet serious, which can only occur between intimate friends. It is the English way of doing things. Of course the discussion went on so quietly that no other member of the party knew anything about it; and the result of it was that Harington and Veryan went home that night very much dissatisfied with each other, and not very well satisfied with themselves.

Well, as the poet rhymes from whom I got a moral for this chapter—

“ If life were never bitter,
And love were always sweet,

A DINNER AT RICHMOND.

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Then who would care to borrow
A moral from the morrow?—
If Thames would always glitter,
And joy would ne'er retreat,
If life were never bitter,
And love were always sweet."

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO DISAPPEARANCES.

"This said, he left them, and returned no more."

I HAVE the honour of differing from a good many people in reference to contemporary poetry. Much admiring Mr. Tennyson, I am not to be persuaded that the *Idylls of the King* and *In Memoriam* are great poems. They appear to me as far inferior to *Maud* and *The Princess* as *Great Expectations* to *The Old Curiosity Shop*, or *Esmond* to *Vanity Fair*. Nor am I ready to believe that any poem of the Laureate's Arthurean circle is equal in power and beauty to Mr. Matthew Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*. Again, I

lovingly studied the writings of Mr. Robert Browning in days when his enthusiastic eulogists had not heard his name; but these laudatory critics will not convince me that his greatness is in proportion to his obscurity, that *Sordello* is finer than *Pippa Passes*, or that it is not a mistake to write a poem as long as the *Iliad* upon a story of adultery and murder such as few sensation novelists would care to borrow. And the unreasoning haste with which certain sections of the reading public accept George Eliot's *Spanish Gipsy* as poetry is to me as ludicrous as the rage for Mr. Swinburne and the subsequent reaction against him. Every line that George Eliot writes proves that she could never be a poet; every line of Mr. Swinburne proves that he is a poet, though not the mighty master of the art which his early admirers thought

him. Among the elements of high poetry there are two which can never be absent—sanity and magic. George Eliot has the sanity without the magic: Mr. Swinburne the magic without the sanity.

Few poems have for years made so deep an impression on lovers of pure poetry as Mr. Matthew Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy*. It appeals to a feeling which, in this century of hurry, in this island of "getting-on-in-the-world," is prevalent among men of strong individuality. When a man can merge himself in humanity, and be reconciled to the position of a small link in an infinite chain, and plod on through life with a quiet belief that it is his duty to do his work, and make his money, and provide for his posterity, and improve the condition of his inferiors, surely it is well with him. He is not scorched by life's fitful fever. He

has no sympathy with the great writer and politician who tells us that youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle, old age a regret. Badly enough would the world get on without such men—the Philistines of our race. To them *The Scholar Gipsy* would be sheer nonsense, of a rather dangerous kind—as bad for young men as *Jack Shepherd* or *Eugene Aram*.

But there are other men, a minority, in whom there is a definite individuality, in whom the nomad instinct grows strong. They *are*, consciously, links in a chain, atoms of an arrangement, but they resent the position, and would fain escape from it. Of such stuff poets are made, and lovers of far travel; a strange, vague vision lies before them, and they strive to reach it—knowing full well it is unreach-able.

" 'Tis but to prove limitation, and measure a cord, that we travel :

Let who would 'scape and be free, go to his chamber and think."

Alas, is not this to "prove limitation" likewise ?

My *Saturday Review* of the week in which I am now writing presents me with a masterly review of the year 1868. I have not read it. I have not indeed looked as closely as I ought into the private events of my own year. To sit down on New Year's Eve, and carefully review all that has occurred during one of the earth's journeys round the sun—to recall lost friends, lost opportunities, all the innumerable failures of the time, is no pleasant business for any of us. Happy they who can also recall the happiness of a past period ; but happiness comes like sunshine on a photographic surface, producing images which a touch will ef-

face—while misery bites into the soul like some strong acid acting on a plate of steel. However, to recur to my favourite hebdomadal. Here is a paragraph from its masterly review :—

“The public, glad to find any object of interest apart from politics, was disquieted early in the year by the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Speke. It had been clearly proved by theorists that he had been murdered, when he was found disguised as a drover, and explained that he had hidden himself partly as a joke and partly on religious principles. It was satisfactory to find that an eccentric clergyman, whose name no one had previously heard, was alive ; but it was still more satisfactory a little later in the year to ascertain that the great traveller of South Africa was alive, and that Dr. Livingstone was working his way down to the coast.”

After all, perhaps, the same æstrus which drove Livingstone into the lion-haunted inland of Africa drove Speke into Devon. Of course, from the Philistine's point of view, his conduct was unjustifiable ; but he may have been driven by the irresistible impulse which acted on the Scholar Gipsy and on Lavengro. Was

it not a touch of that same impulse which caused an eminent journalist to love the ocean-marge of Tintagel, where the sea is as wild and the coast as iron as in the fierce old time of Arthur and Launcelot?

On the day which followed the little dinner at Richmond, London was a little amazed by a sudden disappearance. The Dezii had been announced in a new part: she was to be the heroine of a romantic opera by a composer who had won laurels abroad, but was hitherto unknown in England. A superb success was anticipated.

At the very last moment the distracted manager was obliged to provide his disgusted audience with inferior fare, and to issue a bulletin to the effect that the popular *prima donna* was very ill indeed. He did not venture to tell the public

the truth—that the popular *prima donna* was not to be found anywhere. She had vanished from Verulam Gardens without taking even her confidential lady's-maid: but her favourite Maltese terrier was gone.

Of course, amid a myriad of rumours, the truth leaked out. And then came the exciting question—the Dezii having suddenly disappeared, who was her companion? Actresses don't run away alone, it is obvious. It would be quite contrary to all human experience that anything of this kind should happen. And as a *prima donna* makes much money, everybody agreed that the Dezii's companion must be a great peer or a millionaire. It is an odd tendency of the people of England, whose very noblest literature is dramatic, and whose stage has had a succession of great actors

and actresses, to regard the virtue and morality of ladies who act as quite an imponderable quality. The only thing that puzzled the public was that nobody could be identified as the probable Lothario. Nobody who had money enough was missing. The Duke of St. James was to be seen in Rotten Row. Mr. Lanyon had been met at Tattersall's. There was no observable gap in the *jeunesse dorée*.

Somebody else however had left town suddenly—as indeed was often his custom—our friend Paul Veryan. Paul, also on the day after the dinner, had shouldered his knapsack, whistled his dogs, and walked off with an intimation to Denis that he should be away for a few days, and that his correspondence might await his return. The Irishman, who knew his master's habits, was

not at all surprised. Mr. Staley, who never particularly cared to have his superior officer on the premises, hoped he would stay away till the next board meeting, which was in three weeks' time.

Now Tom Harington, who was one of the first men in the world to repent having made a fool of himself, determined to see his friend early on the day after the dinner, and amicably settle their absurd quarrel. After all, he reflected, the Dezii probably did not care a fig for either of them; and even if she did prefer Paul, what right had he, Tom Harington, to be angry? However, it so happened that he did not effect his purpose; for, going first to the office of his paper, he there encountered Mr. Eastbury, and with him the person to whom he was about to

sell the property. This latter was a fellow who looked as if kicking would be too good for him; and the way in which he bullied his private secretary, an unhappy little man with a ferret-like face, was quite enough to show his character. Harington, naturally in anything but a pleasant temper at the prospect of losing his editorship, and seeing mismanaged by blockheads a journal which he had made brilliant and racy, did not get on very comfortably with these people. He was pretty haughty when he chose to be; and he showed his extreme contempt for both Eastbury and the Irish member very plainly indeed. When, before leaving the office he found that Eastbury proposed to pay him three months' salary on the transfer of the paper, his ire culminated.

"If you had acted like a gentleman,"

he said to the Old Man of the Sea, "I'd have scorned to take a sou of you. As it is, you'll pay me a year's salary."

And Eastbury, at a later period, found that he had to do so.

Well, Tom Harington stayed at his office smoking till it was too late to call on Veryan; and then he went to the Albion to dine, intending to go to the Opera. But the very first man he met there, Lindsay the artist, asked him a question that startled him.

"Ah, Harington," he said, "the very man. You journalists always know everything. What's become of her?"

"Her! who?"

"You feign innocence capitally," said Lindsay. "Why, the Dezii, to be sure."

"The Dezii! She's going to play to-night."

"Come, this *won't* do. If she's going

to play, you know more than the manager, who has been tearing his hair out by handfuls. She's gone, my boy; *erupit, evasit*, and all that. Haven't you seen an evening paper?"

Harington was aghast: his soup stood before him untouched. She had seemed, though a marvellous singer and actress, and a very pretty hand at flirtation, such a sensible quiet little girl. He could not have imagined her doing such a thing. He did not believe that she belonged to the class whom a prince or a millionaire could bribe to infamy. He left his dinner and Lindsay and the Albion abruptly, and made straight to the theatre to inquire. He received the only possible answer. She was gone, and nobody knew where.

I believe our friend spent that night in fruitless investigation. Any way, he

didn't go to bed; but at about eight in the morning he turned up at the Hummums in Jermyn Street, where he refreshed himself with a Roman bath and an Oriental breakfast. After this, he went to call on Paul Veryan.

"Went away yesterday!" he exclaimed, when Denis told him of his master's movements. "The villain!"

For of course he instantaneously jumped to the conclusion that the two were gone off together.

"I see their plan," he said to himself, as he drove away in a hansom, without any idea of where he was going. "They slipped off quietly, and met at some railway station. They're at Calais or Boulogne by now. Well, I've nothing to do, thanks to that infernal Eastbury, and I'll pursue them, wherever they are."

Thus in his rage soliloquised Harington,

unconscious of the fact that his cabman had brought him to Charing Cross, and was anxiously waiting for an answer to his inquiry where he should drive next. When he did become awake thereto, it occurred to him that if the fugitives had arranged to cross the Channel, they might very likely go from Charing Cross station: so he dismissed his cab, and began eagerly questioning the officials as to their Continental passengers. But the only result was to impress on his brain a confused notion that all the tall men and pretty women in London had just started for the Continent.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OTTERMOOR.

"Amid the Muses thou art deaf and dumb,
Amid the gladiators halt and numb."

WHILE Harington was seeking a trace of his friend at Charing Cross station, and imagining him comfortably established in wicked companionship and remorseful luxury at some vast Parisian hotel, where do you think Paul was? Would that I had the power to sketch him! Indolently he sat in the stern of a boat, on a beautiful wild winding stream of amber water—amber, yet so pellucid that he could perceive the medusae making their way seaward. And does he realize the lyrist's dream?

“ Pleasant it is in a boat to glide,
On a river whose ripples to ocean haste,
With indolent fingers fretting the tide,
And an indolent arm round a darling waist.”

Well, there is a lady in the boat—but Paul’s arm is not around her darling waist: in point of fact hers is a formidable waist to encircle, for she is rather a giantess than otherwise, and is rowing Paul up stream with the strong steady stroke with which she has heretofore led her sisters to victory over boatmen from the Tyne. Paul’s companion is not the Dezii, by any means, but quite as remarkable a woman in her way—Betsy Tipper, boat-woman, of Silveroar. She is eighteen years old, six feet in her stockings, thirteen stone in her smock, and over her splendid shoulders falls abundance of that bright yellow hair which the Scandinavian goddesses wore. Is Paul running away with a feminine Titan, or rather a femi-

nine Titan running away with Paul?

Not a bit of it. You know what nostalgia is. You remember Jacopo Foscari's wild longing to remain in Venice, even as prisoner. Paul Veryan, amid the mighty movement of the metropolis, his own soul vexed with unanticipated prosperity, with a vision of love, with a fantasy of flirtation, longed to touch his own native soil, to dip in the delicious water of the river by which he was born, to tread again the wide wild moorland which his boyhood had known. So he suddenly left town, with his dogs and his knapsack; and after a couple of hundred miles' rail, found himself at the good town of Ottermouth, where he had entered the world.

It is the fable of Antaeus over again. The poet-nature has close intimacy with the primal Goddess, Ge or Hertha.

Not to all of us is it given to know what followed *ix τῆς Οὐρανοῦ καὶ τῆς μέγας*. Probably the whole of what we call the poetic genius might be described as knowledge of one's parents—the Allfather and the Mighty Mother.

As Paul Vryan sat in the stern of that boat upon the river Otter, and saw this mighty daughter of the oar doing her work with wondrous ease, he could not help thinking how life in cities tends to diminish the natural powers of the human race. What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue: ay, and in the pursuit of shadows how utterly do we neglect the substance of life—health of body first, and then health of soul! What is the secret of happiness? Surely to enjoy the Present. Where is the man who acts on this principle?—who does not create his own misery by either

brooding over the Past or worrying himself about the Future?

Veryan took leave of his giantess, paying her a liberal fee, a few miles above Silveroar. He leaped ashore, followed by his dogs, where the river had grown narrower; where there was a tiny bay of sand, and a little village hidden among cherry and walnut trees, and an old grey church with a square tower, alive with jackdaws. On the other side of the river stood a modern castellated mansion, in a well-kept park: but on this side the ground rose high above the village, and on the sky line Paul perceived the irregular summits of the great Ottermoor. Having refreshed himself with a glass of cider served by a cherry-cheeked maid at the village tavern, he started cheerily to breast the hill.

O the delight of solitude, of silence

save for the cry of birds and sough of streams, of the elastic turf beneath one's tread and the pure air of the mountain in one's lungs! Paul walked briskly on for hours, for miles; eastward he walked, while the air grew cooler, and the sky in front of him crimsoned with a reflex of a splendid sunset which lay behind. Presently he descended into a cirque of turf which might have been the arena of some great tourney in the forgotten years of romantic chivalry: great blocks of stone lay in order round it, as if for the lovely ladies in whose honour lances were broken. On one of these he sat awhile, and lit a cigar, and looked back towards the west.

Amid his reverie his eye was caught by something which sparkled strangely in the slanting sunlight a few yards from where he sat. Lazily enough he re-

garded it, and when his dream and his cigar were over, had gone a few steps on his way without troubling himself to ascertain what it might be. Suddenly recollecting it, however, he turned back to satisfy his very slight curiosity: to his surprise, the brilliant reflector was a blood-red ruby of considerable size, set in an antique massive ring of gold, so large that it slipped easily over the joint of his thumb.

“Have the giants been here?” he thought, “dropping gems from their little fingers? I am turning into a hero of romance. Nothing has gone quietly with me since I met that queer wanderer Eeles at that old-fashioned Surrey inn. I am become the victim of assassins and actresses, and heaven knows what else. Well, it's no use speculating. I must move on, or I shall have to sleep on

the heather. I suppose after all some thievish bird of the moorland stole the ring and dropped it here."

He strode on, passing through a natural gateway formed by two mighty rocks: it looked for all the world as if it led to some castle of old romance. Beyond, the silence of the moor was broken by the roar of headlong waters: the wayfarer had come upon a bend of the river Otter, far above navigation, where it dashes itself wildly upon its rocks of eternal granite. He crossed it by a narrow bridge that looked primæval—ferns were growing in every fissure of its rough masonry, which was gray and yellow with the lichen of centuries. In crossing Veryan encountered the first person he had seen since the village maiden who gave him his cider.

This was a tall man in a homespun

garb, all one colour. His hair was iron gray, as also was his long beard. A huge dog of the mastiff breed accompanied him. Paul was not sorry to see the stranger, for the sunset was fading, and his only guide hitherto had been a Walker's map and a compass which hung at his watch chain, and he began to feel anxious about supper and bed. So he immediately asked the distance of the nearest inn.

"That," replied the stranger, "is rather hard to say, as there are several about the same distance. But the nearest is perhaps about twelve miles."

"Then," said Paul, "I mustn't loiter. It is past eight now, I see, and people in these parts go to bed early."

"If you are not obstinately bent on sleeping at an inn," said the stranger, in a good-humoured tone, "I can give you

something to eat and a tolerable bed. My cottage is close by here, and I've no companions except my dog Argo, and an old woman who is inexorably deaf."

"You are very kind, and I shall be very glad to accept your offer. To tell you the truth, I am beginning to feel hungry, now I think of it."

"You have come far?"

Paul described his route.

"Ah, a good walk for a Londoner, which I suppose you are. But Londoners are often as good walkers as born mountaineers. Come, let us go to my cottage and find some supper."

It was only a few steps. The cottage, a quaint irregular low-storied building, was divided from the river by a small lawn: behind it a granite wall rose perpendicular about a hundred feet. An orchard of old apple-trees, with mossy curving

boughs, covered with mistletoe, grew on both sides of it. The owner of this lonely domicile opened the door, and ushered Paul Veryan into a comfortable low-ceiled oak-wainscoated room, with a wood fire burning brightly on an open hearth. All the furniture was black oak: on a side-board stood silver salvers and tankards: on the wall hung a single painting, a full-length life-size portrait of a young and handsome man, dressed in a courtly costume of the past, with a naked rapier in his right hand.

"More adventure," thought Paul. "I'm in for perpetual romance, assuredly."

Meanwhile, Growl and Wag were contentedly stretching themselves before the fire, on perfectly amiable terms with the big mastiff.

"You will have to be content with simple fare," said Paul's entertainer. "If

you can exhaust your appetite on a cold saddle of mountain mutton, here you have it. As to drink, I should like you to try some old cider I've got: but you need not be afraid of getting nothing else, for I've a bottle or two of tolerable claret left."

"I am a native of the shire," said Paul, "and ought to be able to drink cider."

He took a great pull at a tankard which had been filled for him, and declared it was the best he had ever tasted.

"You were thirsty. Still, it is not bad; it has been many years in the wood. I have some of the same in bottle, for whoever likes effervescence. We'll try it."

Poured into champagne glasses, the homelier fluid shamed both in bouquet

and flavour much of the rubbish for which people pay ridiculous prices, because it is the fashion. My friend Mr. Sala says that everybody would drink Guinness's stout if it were half a guinea a bottle. I should like to have his opinion on old cider that has been well bottled and cellared as carefully as if it had been a costly wine.

Paul made a glorious supper after his long walk. The cider was supplemented by a bottle of good sound ante-Gladstone claret: and then appeared some old cognac and a box of big cigars. Altogether, our hero came to the conclusion that he was in singularly snug quarters. Growl and Wag, who had feasted upon mutton-bones, stretched themselves before the fire, and blinked with a similar conviction.

Curious was the colloquy between Paul

Veryan and the Recluse that night. It was a night which seemed to justify the remark of King Alcinous: Νῦξ δ' ἦδε μάλα μακρὴ, ἀβίσφατος. This singular dweller in the moorland had not been near a town or seen a newspaper for many years. To him the map of Europe was very much the same as it was at the date of Waterloo. He carefully avoided news, and specially requested Paul not to tell him anything that was going on. In his hot youth, when George the Third was king, he had buried himself in this solitude, retiring from the midst of a brilliant and superb society. Of that society, its gallant men and fascinating women, he had many a choice story to record: but he ignored all after time, having passed the interval in communing with nature and with himself. He knew every wild denizen of the Ottermoor; what

streams the bull-trout haunted, and what morasses the snipe; where the plover laid its exquisite eggs; what rocks were inhabited by ancient ravens, what caverns by ferocious badgers; when the visit of the epicure osprey showed that red mullet had reached the river mouth. So much for nature: as to what he knew of himself I can bear no testimony. Perchance, dwelling in absolute solitude for years, a man may in time know something of that strange mystery, his soul—that deep-hidden source of all his ideas and feelings, which is more difficult to reach than the far fountain whence springs the mysterious Nile. Whoso has found the soul at its unceasing task has had a rare experience—but cannot tell what he knows.

The dawn was close upon them when they separated for repose. The Recluse

showed Paul the most comfortable of bedrooms, where he slept the dreamless sleep of the wayfarer: and next morning, after a dip in the rapid Otter, an ample homely breakfast rejoiced him. Trout, plump of shoulder and pink of flesh—ham from a princely boar—tea deftly made with the soft water from the river, and flavoured with the richest cream—are not bad things for matutinal consumption.

“Stay with me a day or two,” said the Recluse, “and I will show you more of the neighbourhood than you will see without guidance in a month. I know the moor better than the moormen themselves.”

Paul was not loth. He had plenty of time; nobody knew where he was; and the converse of his companion had a curious flavour. So they wandered, these

twain, over the length and breadth of this wild wide country; found the pool far in its centre where the Otter rises; explored all its legend-haunted nooks, every one of which the Recluse lighted up with its tradition of giant or fairy, of knight or abbot; saw the solitary wood of aged oaks, sole remnant of the forest which once overspread the moor; drank together the water of the Wishing Well; and had about as pleasant a time as can be imagined.

Late one afternoon they passed through the same cirque of turf, with vast blocks of stone, by which Paul had entered this region of romance.

"This," said the Recluse, "looks like the scene of a legend. And it has its tradition. Folk say that here a tournament was held, in Arthur's days, the prizes to be gems of great price: but

the knights were suddenly seized with anger, and the tournament became a battle, and the superb gems were trodden into the turf. Men are said even now to find them—and the finder's destiny is fortunate.

Paul had never mentioned the ring he had found. He took it from his pocket. The great ruby shone like a drop of blood in the sunlight.

"I found this here," said Paul. "What do you call the place?"

"Curious," said the old man, looking meditatively at the ring. "The place is called Carn Veryan."

CHAPTER XXI.

MORBIDA.

"Wilt thou be a nun, Sophie,
 Nothing but a nun?
 Is it not a better thing
 With thy friends to laugh and sing,
 To be loved and sought, Sophie,
 To be woo'd and won?
 Dost thou love the shadow, Sophie,
 Better than the sun?"

IF writing were only as easy as talking, with what pleasant facility might one rattle off a three volume novel, or a drama in five acts, or an epic poem, or any trifle of that sort! And why is it not? Simply because the man who talks has his appreciative audience close at hand, while the man who writes must be con-

tinually drawing upon his imagination for an audience. And too often, as the poor devil of an author knows by sad experience, his draft is not honoured.

I have followed my hero too long and too far, neglecting my heroine—whoever she may be. Two young ladies, candidates for that position, had seen a good deal of Paul Veryan in London. While Miss Elmore and the little fugitive Miss Brabazon had been the guests of Hogmire, they had enjoyed snatches of intercourse with Paul—such snatches being all the more enjoyable because not strictly according to etiquette. Aurora, being a strong-minded young lady, second in command at the Azure Academy, with Agnes under her care, was unquestionably alive to the fact that she had come to town to see her revered uncle, and not to associate with Paul. However, the best-

conducted of feminine folk do not invariably prefer uncles to other men.

Miss Elmore and Miss Brabazon, after a pleasant time in London, had returned to their respective duties under the roof of Miss Priscilla Bettsworth. For none of us may holidays last for ever: by-and-by school reopens, and Dr. Birch meets his young friends. Now, I trust any young lady who reads this book will forgive me for stating the humiliating truth that both Aurora and Agnes fell in love—or fancied they fell in love—with Paul Veryan, or with some creature of their imagination that assumed Paul's shape. You would hardly have thought it of little Agnes, would you? The virginal thing, as shy as an unopened snowdrop, as easily startled as a young fawn, had run away from home at the idea of marrying Lanyon, a

you can exhaust your appetite on a cold saddle of mountain mutton, here you have it. As to drink, I should like you to try some old cider I've got: but you need not be afraid of getting nothing else, for I've a bottle or two of tolerable claret left."

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Paul made a glorious supper after his long walk. The cider was supplemented by a bottle of good sound ante-Gladstone claret: and then appeared some old cognac and a box of big cigars. Altogether, our hero came to the conclusion that he was in singularly snug quarters. Growl and Wag, who had feasted upon mutton-bones, stretched themselves before the fire, and blinked with a similar conviction.

Curious was the colloquy between Paul

Meanwhile, a word with Miss Elmore. Paul had only flirted with Agnes, but he had certainly made love to Aurora. Not that he talked any nonsense to her, since she was a young woman to whom nobody could talk nonsense. But encountering, for the very first time in his life, a woman whose intellect satisfied his own—a woman perfectly child-like, yet full of the highest knowledge as a rose is filled with morning dew—he had tacitly assumed with her that intimacy which can have only one ending. Paul had never talked love to Aurora, yet every tone of his voice, every glance of his eye meant love. She never doubted him and his meaning. She felt as if she were his wife already. All through that enchanted time, when she awoke to the dull morning light of Islington, where dwelt the ero-

streams the bull-trout haunted, and what morasses the snipe; where the plover laid its exquisite eggs; what rocks were inhabited by ancient ravens, what caverns by ferocious badgers; when the visit of the epicure osprey showed that red mullet had reached the river mouth. So much for nature: as to what he knew of himself I can bear no testimony. Perchance, dwelling in absolute solitude for years, a man may in time know something of that strange mystery, his soul—that deep-hidden source of all his ideas and feelings, which is more difficult to reach than the far fountain whence springs the mysterious Nile. Whoso has found the soul at its unceasing task has had a rare experience—but cannot tell what he knows.

The dawn was close upon them when they separated for repose. The Recluse

Great British respectability by justifying a governess for being in love. That, I admit, is a most heinous offence, which should cause all right-minded persons to bemoan the desuetude of flagellation.

Paul Veryan, entangled with Lady Lucy and Diana Dezii, neither of whom he thought worth an eyelash of Aurora's, nevertheless forgot that young lady, and indulged in a headlong career of flirtation. Miss Elmore saw nothing of him for some days previous to her leaving town for the Azure Academy. She had no way of discovering what had become of him, and indeed would not have condescended to make any inquiry. She went, seriously and sadly, back to her duties in Surrey, taking her young charge with her. Ordinarily keen in such matters, her own pre-occupation prevented her perceiving that Agnes Brabazon had a slight

twain, over the length and breadth of this wild wide country; found the pool far in its centre where the Otter rises; explored all its legend-haunted nooks, every one of which the Recluse lighted up with its tradition of giant or fairy, of knight or abbot; saw the solitary wood of aged oaks, sole remnant of the forest which once overspread the moor; drank together the water of the Wishing Well; and had about as pleasant a time as can be imagined.

Late one afternoon they passed through the same cirque of turf, with vast blocks of stone, by which Paul had entered this region of romance.

"This," said the Recluse, "looks like the scene of a legend. And it has its tradition. Folk say that here a tournament was held, in Arthur's days, the prizes to be gems of great price: but

And so, this being a period of feminine transition, Miss Elmore began to consider with much seriousness what it was her duty to do. It will be quite understood by all readers that a young lady of her calibre and vocation was not unacquainted with the deeply philosophical discussions of woman's social position which have for a long time occupied the *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. She had read the brilliant articles in those journals and in others, not without an instinctive rebellion against the general tendency of their teaching: for it happily happens that the Amazons are a myth (a very instructive myth, by the way), and that no woman who is fit for womanly work in the world is ever misled by pragmatistical journalists who tell her that her true career is to compete with man. Doubtless there are quite as

many men who wish they were women as there are women who wish they were men. But the former disease has not yet come under the notice of the sensation journalists.

Aurora Elmore, having been taught by high authorities that woman is capable of doing man's work in the world, and having, by reason in some degree of her own imprudence, been placed in a position extremely unsatisfactory to a high-spirited girl, began to consider how she could act henceforth independently, ignoring the existence of man. She felt (though perhaps she was wrong) perfectly capable of acting as Home Secretary or Lord Chancellor, or editing the *Times*, or any little matter of that sort. I suppose Penthesilea felt similarly till the fatal day on which she met Achilles. It is a mistake which ought to be forgiven in woman,

since it commonly indicates the existence of power, as yet undirected. Give a woman with these vague quasi-masculine aspirations a man strong enough to rule and wise enough to guide her, and what a wife she will make!

However, our poor Aurora had felt certain dim intimations of possible wifehood; and, these being disappointed, her faculties naturally turned in other directions. You see, she was rather spoilt. She was a remarkably well-educated woman, in the ladies' seminary sense of the phrase; and not many women can bear that sort of education. I have no doubt she knew all about *Mangnall's Questions* and the Use of the Globes: but if she had read Shakespeare it was by stealth, and Byron had probably been found an abomination. Perfect in Pinnock, had she heard of Voltaire?

I was walking one day long ago through the rather common-place and not peculiarly lively town of Great Marlow—famous for the manufacture of skewers. My companion was a young lady. I pointed out to her the house in which it is said that Shelley dwelt, in his young days of vivid poetry. She perceptibly shuddered. She had evidently heard of Shelley from some dear old feminine foggy as an embodiment of all that was wicked in man. That is, I believe, the ladies' seminary view of him. I am told that at such establishments Cowper and Watts were the favourite poets until the advent of Tupper.

Miss Elmore reflected carefully and long as to what it was possible for her to do in the world. Conscious that, if Paul Veryan had asked her to be his wife, she should have given an affirmative reply, she felt, I suppose, a certain amount of

shame at having entertained the idea. I believe it is quite right that women should not take the initiative in such matters; that, indeed, their tendencies should be rigorously controlled, and the sense of shame brought to bear as a controlling power. For in the poetaster's verse—

“’Tis all the world to me, love,
’Tis half the world to you—”

there lurks a meaning which its author was incapable of suspecting. Juliet may be Juliet at forty, but Romeo would never be the true Romeo after five and twenty, or thereabouts. Well, Aurora Elmore began to think what she should do; and of course the most sensible thing on which she could possibly determine was to remain in her present position at the Azure Academy. Equally of course this never occurred to her as a possible alternative. Such restlessness

had been caused by her recent experience that she felt it absolutely necessary to do something new and strange. What should it be? She was ruminating this difficult point when silly little Agnes Brabazon burst in upon her.

"O Aurora!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, "I am *so* miserable. I feel I am no use in the world. Everybody hates me. You don't care about me half as much as you used to. As to papa and mamma, they don't think of me a bit."

If the little monkey could have known how the old Colonel missed his daughter every hour of the day, she would hardly have said that. But it is notoriously difficult for a daughter to realize the fact that her father may rather like her than otherwise. She is far readier to believe in the passionate adoration of the first hobbadehoy that pays her any attention.

Miss Elmore was a little taken aback. Here was a girlish caricature of her own feelings and ideas, and she was not quite prepared for its reception.

"What is the matter, Agnes?" she asked. "What possible reason can you have for being discontented? I am sure I thought you were very happy here."

"I don't know about being happy," said Miss Brabazon. "I used to be much happier at home at Bowness with papa and mamma, before that horrid Mr. Lanyon persecuted me."

"Yes, but, my dear child, you seemed happy enough here before that last visit to London. What can have occurred to make you discontented?"

"O, I can't tell you," responded Agnes, burying her head in her hands and sobbing. "I can't tell you—only I know I'm very miserable."

"Well, darling, what do you want?" asked Aurora.

"I want to go away—out of the way of everybody—I should like to be a nun or something of that sort. Can't I, do you think?"

Miss Elmore had been reflecting on similar possibilities for herself. But for this she would have laughed at her little friend, and suggested that she wanted a whipping. As it was, the affair assumed a more serious aspect. Had she read the Servian translations of Mr. Lytton, she might have quoted "the pale Pachinitza's" saying :

"Poison they said it was. I too have drunk of it.
This is the passionate poison of love."

Many thoughts passed rapidly through her mind. At last she said :

"Tell me, Agnes, have you seen any one in London that you liked very much?"

Agnes indulged in much sobbing.

There followed an acute cross-examination; and by-and-by Miss Brabazon was induced to confess that she very much liked Mr. Veryan, but that Mr. Veryan had never said anything to her except flattering her about being pretty and clever ("Which I'm not," said Agnes—nor was she), and hoping to see her again, and much more of that frivolous sort.

The artless confession was probing Miss Elmore's wounds in shrewd surgical fashion. So, when she had to scold and console Agnes, she felt that she also was the object of tender objurgation.

"You are a very foolish child, Agnes," she said. "Of course your silliness is excusable, since you are so young, and have so little experience of the world. Gentlemen, you know, will always flatter pretty little girls. They don't mean anything, and

it is very foolish to take the slightest notice of them. I am sure Mr. Veryan can never have said a word to justify your behaving in this manner."

Agnes became more tearful than ever. Aurora felt that she was lecturing herself. What had Paul Veryan said or done to justify her strong feeling towards him? Nothing tangible or definite, certainly: yet she had felt quite certain that he loved her. Now, however, there came a little girl who had the same complaint: and Aurora asked herself whether she had any better reason than Agnes Brabazon for loving Paul Veryan. Was it not entire infatuation? Heart-whole herself, she would have soundly scolded little Agnes for her folly and impropriety; but now every word that she uttered to her pupil had for herself a deeper meaning.

Is it not the same with many of the

sterner sex? Does the parson always de-claim the decalogue with perfect satisfaction to himself? Of course the merchant-prince who prosecutes his clerk for embezzlement, himself having transformed his insolvent firm into a limited liability company, with a prospectus of prodigious prosperity, is not to be blamed. Why should he?

When Agnes had listened to her lecture, and gone away comparatively calm, Aurora Elmore fell vindictively upon herself, and administered the discipline with strenuous severity. That she—*she*, so vain of her own mental independence and dignity—should have been just as easily trapped as a mere silly child like Agnes Brabazon! That she should for an instant have imagined the jejune flatteries of an unscrupulous person like Mr. Veryan to have the slightest significance! That,

because she heard nothing from him, she should think of giving up her present position, and acting in some wild and eccentric way! It was absurd. She would forget Paul Veryan. She would adhere to her work in the Azure Academy. She would begin some new course of study—the differential calculus, or Sanscrit, or Siamese. She would look after that silly little Agnes, and make her understand that she must not think every man who looked at her was in love with her, and that she was much too young to trouble her head about such matters.

How Miss Elmore kept her excellent resolutions may be left to the reader's conjecture. All I know is that she dreamt that night of being married to Paul Veryan—and that, while they were spending a delightful honeymoon in some solitary island, her uncle Hogmire came in the

shape of a very unwashed dragon, and carried her husband away.

I always think there is something in dreams.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ANCHORITE'S ADVICE.

"Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain."

ADVICE is the one thing which in this world everybody likes to give and nobody likes to receive. Yet are there times when even advice is of use; yet are there people capable of advising, and people advisable. All very rare, it must be admitted. At the same time, curiously enough, the sale of advice is about the most lucrative trade in these days. Mr. Spurgeon thereby fills his Tabernacle: the *Times* thereby makes Mr. Walter a great prince in Berkshire. You find it everywhere. "Gesticulate!" quoth Mackonochie.

"Apply Horticulture to Theology!" says Purchas. "Apply Arithmetic to Theology!" exclaims Colenso. "Breakfast on Epps's cocoa!" preaches Epps. "Swallow the pills of Holloway!" says Holloway. And there are people who take such advice.

But Paul Veryan found an adviser of another order, and a very useful adviser. His singular intimacy with the Recluse of the Ottermoor had been of some value to him. It does young fellows good—and I regard all men under forty as "young fellows"—to hold intercourse with their seniors. Even if the said seniors are stupid folk, such intercourse is valuable: for in the eyes of the dwellers on Olympus there are slight differences among mortals, and the experience of many decades is of more service than the brilliant intuition of youthful genius.

Well, Paul and his venerable friend

became closely intimate. There was something curious in Paul's destiny, evidently: here in his native county he had verified an old tradition by picking up a ruby ring—and the stones where he found it bore his own name. What that name meant he had never cared to ask: and the whole adventure produced upon him a mere effect of mystification. However, as I have said, he and his host grew intimate. By-and-by, they exchanged stories. Paul Veryan's history was simple enough: he had fought with poverty and thrown himself into the arms of love.

The Recluse had a sterner story to narrate. That portrait on the wall of his cottage was of himself in his hot and hasty youth. It was half a century ago. He had loved a woman such as these later generations could not produce: she had become his wife, and then deserted

him for his best friend on earth. What was to be done? Of course his duty was to kill his false friend, and he did his duty. And then horrified at what he had done, he retired into a quiet and remote corner of the world, having taken precautions to make men believe that he had left England altogether.

"I have thrown away my life," he said to Paul Veryan, "and so you will perhaps forgive me for warning you not to throw away yours. You are doing nothing in the world, and you are making a fool of yourself with women. It is pleasant for you to have the situation you describe, and to receive a comfortable income for doing nothing. But is it honest? Why should the English people, oppressed as they are with heavy burdens, pay *you* a thousand a year for no work whatever? Doubtless you will argue that, if *you*

don't take the money, somebody else will; but I cannot see that any man has a right to do an act which he knows to be dishonourable simply because the people about him cannot see that it is dishonourable. The world, you see, would morally stand still if this were to become the rule of life."

"Then you would recommend me to give up my secretaryship," said Paul. "Lord Latimer would think me an ungrateful idiot."

"I knew Lord Latimer long before you were born, and, I am sorry to say, deferred to his opinion. The Earl is not much altered by his half-century, I expect. He had no scruples in his youth: I imagine he is perfectly free from such weaknesses now."

"But, you see, he very kindly offered me this appointment, though I was a per-

fect stranger to him. And it gives me a position which I could never have obtained in any other way. My predecessor is now in Parliament."

"My dear Veryan," said the old man, "your arguments are unanswerable from the point of view taken by common sense. It is only an aged blockhead like myself who would venture to say that the existence of such a sinecure as that which you occupy is disgraceful and criminal. The general public think quite otherwise: possible mothers-in-law are especially of opinion that a young man should get as much money as possible, and do for it as little as possible. But there is a second consideration, quite as important as the first. While you hold this sinecure, you are not doing your duty to yourself. Your life is a lazy lounge. You ought to be at work. You do nothing.

You waste the finest years of your life in mere pleasure. A man of your soul and sinew ought to be of service to the world. You attend a board meeting that does nothing once a month, and spend the interval in the mere pursuit of amusement. If other men of your capacity did the same, where would England be, sir?—I ask you, where would England be?"

They were sitting opposite each other on a couple of the huge blocks of granite around Carn Veryan. The Recluse was becoming quite excited over the affair. Paul smoked his cigar and listened.

"And then," said the old man, "you give me the history of your flirtations. They seem to have been interesting, and even poetical. But at the same time you tell me of one woman whom you appear to have loved, and who appears to have loved you. Now, cannot you see your

duty in such a case as this? What good do you do by pursuing an Earl's daughter who certainly won't marry a pauper, or an Italian singer who will look at nothing under a Duke? Egad, I always said the cleverest fellows were the greatest fools—and you seem born on purpose to prove it."

Paul Veryan was a little surprised to find such considerations as these forced upon him by a venerable gentleman who had passed the larger part of his life in the solitudes of the Ottermoor. I don't see why he should have felt any surprise. Inasmuch as the human race can resist anything except temptation, it seems obvious that a gentleman who has spent fifty years some hundred miles from the centres of temptation will be well qualified to act as a moralist.

They walked home to their customary

dinner—Ottermoor mutton, and cider, and claret. And, when Paul Veryan found himself in his bedchamber with his dogs, he devoted the perfect period of a big regalia to the reflexion as to whether the moralist of the Ottermoor was right or wrong. Right, he thought, upon the whole. There seemed no very good reason for the existence of a Thaumaturgical Commission ; and why should a useless commission have a secretary at two thousand a year, who perhaps did no more than write twelve letters in the twelve months? Was it right toward England or good for this lazy secretary? Again, our hero felt that he had no real feeling towards Lady Lucy Latimer or Signora Diana Dezii. The one was wholly above him ; and, though a most delicious little patrician, had shown no touch of those qualities which he most desired in

a wife. The other was simply a sweet songstress; there was no depth in her character, no possibility of passion. But in Aurora Elmore he recognised a woman loveable, and who could love; and then there came upon him, with a wild bitterness, the question whether he had lost this loving creature through his folly and neglect.

Paul Veryan turned in that night with two strong notions in his brain: one that he must resign his secretaryship—the other that he must find Aurora Elmore at once, and ask her the all-important question.

So at breakfast on the following day he told his venerable entertainer that he must return to town, not without an intimation that he had profited by the recent lecture delivered on Carn Veryan. The reply which he received somewhat surprised him.

"Don't act rashly, my young friend. Sleep brings counsel. Perhaps, as the world stands, it is unwise to throw away two thousand a year for doing nothing. Perhaps the young lady whom you think you love, and who you think loves you, will turn out an intolerable nuisance if you marry her. Don't act on my advice with too much precipitation. Better stick to the sinecure and remain a bachelor."

So spake the oracle. But Paul had determined to return to town, and his host walked with him to the margin of the moor. As he watched the gaunt old man walking rapidly homeward into the solitary spaces, he could scarce help thinking that his intercourse with this strange recluse marked a new epoch in his life. What should he do? Should he take things easily, as hitherto, or should he follow that stern stoic advice which he

had yesterday received amid Carn Veryan? His own idea, purified by absence from society and intercourse with his own soul in solitude, was to seek independence and true love.

He entered a little public-house on the verge of the Ottermoor, to drink a glass of cider. On the table lay last week's *News of the World*. He glanced at it: there was a change of Ministry. John Boanerges, the famous democrat of Chalcopolis, was, to everybody's amazement, Home Secretary; and the new Premier had pledged himself to the abolition of pretty nearly everything revered by elderly ladies—and especially of the Thaumaturgical Commission.

"I must get back to town," said Paul Veryan.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



